





ABOUT THE COVER:

"ROUNDTrip OVERLOAD"
MARK JUSTINIANI

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

A FIRST TASTE OF CINEMA:

A Mid-'70s Journey Through Philippine Movies

The mid-'70s was a golden time for Philippine cinema, and for a young child like me, movies held a special allure — even when I was too young to watch them. My Sundays were spent poring over the movie pages of the *Bulletin*, captivated by the ads that promised a world of drama, action, and comedy. Titles like *Kaming Matatapatang ang Apog* caught my imagination, and I often wondered what kind of stories these films told. Even without stepping inside a theater, I felt a connection to the films, fueled by those bold advertisements and the stars they showcased.

That connection deepened one day when my late Mom and I were shopping for clothes in Cubao. We passed by Coronet Theater in Aurora Blvd., and she noticed me staring at the still shots displayed in the lobby. She surprised me by deciding we had time to see a movie — my very first. The film was *Bakit Ako Mahihiya?*, starring Alma Moreno and Eddie Rodriguez. I was thrilled to finally step into a movie theater.

But the experience wasn't what I expected. Instead of action-packed scenes, the film offered just one brief fistfight and a comedic moment where Eddie Rodriguez opened a gift box to reveal an enormous belt. My Mom, however, found the movie delightful, especially since she thought my Dad resembled Eddie Rodriguez — a comment that made her laugh. Despite my initial disappointment, I left the theater with an unforgettable memory: my first movie and the joy of sharing it with my Mom.

As I look back, I realize how much movies shaped my early imagination. Even without watching many films, the vibrant Philippine movie scene of the '70s was impossible to ignore. Stars like Dolphy, Fernando Poe Jr., Nora Aunor, and Vilma Santos were cultural icons whose names and faces filled the pages of newspapers and magazines. Their films dominated the theaters for weeks, drawing in audiences from all walks of life.

In an era without streaming or on-demand viewing, going to the movies was an event — a communal experience where stories came to life in darkened theaters. Films weren't just entertainment; they were a reflection of Filipino humor, values, and struggles.

Today, as we celebrate the rich history of Philippine cinema, I am reminded of those early encounters with film and how they sparked my lifelong love for storytelling. From the first glance at movie ads to sitting in a theater with my Mom, each moment fed my imagination and shaped my view of the world.

As this issue of *Santelmo* explores the vibrant landscape of Filipino film, we hope to honor the past while embracing the future of our cinematic heritage. Movies are more than stories on a screen — they are part of who we are.

MARVIN B. ACERON
EXECUTIVE PUBLISHER

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS:

For the next issue due in March 2024, *SANTELMO* 12 welcomes original and unpublished (online and elsewhere) poetry, fiction, and non-fiction on the theme of "Crossroads: Stories of Choice and Change." Poetry, Fiction and essays about pivotal moments in life, where decisions reshape destinies.

Please email your submissions to santelmophilippines2022@gmail.com along with a three-sentence bio note as an attached Word file in Times New Roman 12 points font size. Kindly include your surname and the submission's genre and language in the email subject. Acceptance will merit a complimentary copy and a modest honorarium. Deadline of submission is on February 15, 2024.

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6 NOEL FERRER
Bituing Laging may Ningning

14 RICA AREVALO
The Impact of the 2024
Film Industry Conference

22 PERCI INTALAN
The Mad Dreamers:
Why Do We Keep Producing Films

32 PAOLO VILLALUNA
Fixing Flat Tires

38 NESSA VALDELLON
The Lost Sabungeros: A Documentary Saga
Involving Cockfighters, the Cinemalaya ...
and a Crocodile?

46 EN VILLASIS
Viva, Vivamos

56 AVID LIONGOREN
The Struggles of Producing
Animation in the Philippines

66 LEO P. KATIGBAK
In with the Old, Saving the Classics

76 GAY ACE DOMINGO
The Artist's Picks: Justin Besana's
Top 10 Posters that He Designed Himself

88 RIO ALMA
Tralala Kingdom | Si Direk

SANTELMO

91 **NICANOR G. TIONGSON**
Pano nga ba Magbasa ng Pelikula?

105 **JOI BARRIOS**
Kung Bakit Pinapanood Ko (pa rin)
ang mga Pelikula ni Sharon Cuneta
(at nina Judy Ann Santos at Iza Calzado)

109 **PATRICK FLORES**
Revisiting Sister Stella L.

116 **PEPE DIOKNO**
Revisiting Himala

124 **FRANK CIMATU**
Subliminal | Howl, O ang Ksiwagong
Capampangan | Notes for a Short MTV
on JOSE "Pempe" Padilla Jr., Former Matinee Idol

130 **MARILOU DIAZ-ABAYA**
RICKY LEE
1 Plus 1 Equals 3: Double Talk Memoirs

139 **JOEY ROMERO**
The Eddie Romero Centenary
— A Recapitulation of Events

145 **LORE REYES**
A heart attack, a flight to Honolulu that
killed my father, and an expensive bomb

157 **ANGELO R. LACUESTA**
Character Sketch:
Amado L. Lacuesta, Jr.

161 **JOEY REYES**
For Mother Lily on Her 85th Birthday

165 **JIM LIBIRAN**
Ang Kahalagahan ng Knowledge System at
Pormularyong Kuwentong Likas na binuo
ni Prop. Armando "Bing" Lao

170 **JOEL DAVID**
Bold in Heaven

178 **CESAR ALJAMA**
Islands Poster

179 **DIANCARLO ABRAHAN**
The Adventure

180 **JUANIYO ARCELLANA**
Noir

181 **ALFRED YUSON**
This Is Not a Film on Khavn

182 **KHAVN DELA CRUZ**
Ang Magkasintahang Mahilig Manood ng
Pelikulang Tungkol sa Pag-ibig | The Lovers
Who Loved to Watch Movies About Love |
Ang Direktor | The Director | Dasal ni Santa
Stela Mangahas para Mapuksa ang MTRCB

188 **JOEL SARACHO**
Ang Aktor Bilang Manggagawa at Manlilikha

196 **BOOTS ANSON**
ROA-RODRIGO
Mowelfund at 50: Bringing Home the Gold
for Film Workers

203 **ALBERT SUNGA**
The Greatest Performance of My Life

211 **JOJO LIM**
Vilma Santos: Idol for All Seasons

224 **EDGAR CALABIA SAMAR**
Shooting the Tiyanak

226 **JERRY B. GRACIO**
Matapos Panoorin ang Ulan | Missing LC

229 **NOEL FERRER**
MMFF 50: Another Golden Year
of Philippine Cinema

BIDA ANG PELIKULA

Bituing Laging may Ningning

NOEL D. FERRER

Sa dami ng mundong aking ginagalawan — academe, media, telebisyon, musika, at minsan teatro — masasabi kong unang-una, ako ay batang pelikula. Natatandaan ko na nanonood ako ng Piling Piling Pelikula sa telebisyon at pumipila noon pa man kapag may entry na pambata sa Metro Manila Film Festival.

Una kong "For Adults Only" na pelikula na napanood sa sinehan ay ang *High School Scandal* ni Gil Portes, na pinagbidahan nina Gina Alajar at Sandy Andolong. Paborito ko kasi noon pa man ang Megastar na si Sharon Cuneta na siyang kumanta ng theme song sa pelikula. Kaya laking saya at karangalan ko nang makatrabaho ko na at maging malapit na kaibigan sina Sharon, Gina, at Sandy nang pasukin ko na ang daigdig ng entertainment.

Paglao'y sa akin na ipinamana ang mga klase ng guro ko ring si Fr. Nick Cruz, at nagturo ako ng Filipino Film at Film Seminar sa Ateneo Communications Department noong ang chair ay ang mahal nating si Doreen Fernandez. Naging guro ko rin sa Graduate School ang Pambansang Alagad ng Sining na sina Marilou Diaz-Abaya, at pagkatapos ay naging bahagi ako sa nakapekahalagang workshop sa pagsulat at pagpapakatao ng kaibigan, at halos pamilya nang si Ricardo "Ricky" Lee. Naging kasapi ako ng Young Critics Circle (YCC), at nang mapagtanto kong hindi sapat na pumuna lamang, itinaya ko ang life savings ko para makalikha ng ilang pelikulang maituturing namang ambag sa indie sine tulad ng *Daybreak*; *Adela*; *Ligo na U*; *Lapit na Me*; *I Love You, Thank You*; *Astig*; *Magdamag*; *Muli*; *Kusina*; at iba pa.

Gusto ko pa ring tapusin ang mga sinimulang scripts sa klase ni Sir Ricky. Nais ko pa ring makagawa ng mga kakaliba at makabuluhang pelikula at dokumentaryo. Kasama na sa misyon ko ang pagiging spokesperson ng taunang Metro Manila Film Festival at ang paglevel-up ng entertainment press para sa mas makabuluhan at may pananagutang pagsusulat tungkol sa sining at kultura, partikular na sa pelikula.

Pero ang pagiging patnugot ng espasyal na "Pelikula Issue" ng *Santelmo Journal* ang pinakamalapit ko nang pagsisikap na maglimbag ng mga akda, pagsusuri, at paghinatay tungkol sa sining na aking kinakahan, na kumalinga sa akin, at sinisikap kong tumulong na kalingain — ang pelikula.



Ang journal na ito ay nahahati sa apat na bahagi. Una ay ang Industry Report na tumatalakay sa kalagayan ng pelikula ngayon. Minarapat kong hingan ng kontribusyon ang Project Development Head ng Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP) na si Rica Arevalo. Kasunod nito ang akda ng pangulo ng Film Producers Guild of the Philippines na si Perci Intalan na ipinaintindi sa atin ang hira at hamon na hinaharap ng mga producers ngayon. Inilahad naman ng secretary-general ng Film Academy of the Philippines na si Paolo Villaluna ang mga hakbang para makuha ang hinahangad (o dapat pa nga bang hangarin) na Oscar nomination. Matapang ang paglalahad ng executive vice president ng GMA Pictures na si Nessa Valdellon sa sinapit ng kanilang dokyu na *Lost Sabungeros*. Salamat din kay En Villasis sa pagbulatlat ng misteryong bumabalot sa napakasikat na *Vivamax*; habang si Avid Llongoren ay ibinahagi ang karanasan niya sa paggawa ng pelikulang animation. At siyempre, mahalaga rin ang ulat ni Leo Katigbak, ang boss ng ABS-CBN Film Restoration, tungkol sa kanilang pagsisikap na sagipin sa pagkasira ng mga pelikula sa kabila ng limitadong resources. Magtatapos ang seksiyong ito sa piyesa ni Gay Ace Domingo tungkol sa mga obra ng pinakamahusay na poster artist ng ating bansa ngayon na si Justin Besana.

Ang ikalawang bahagi naman ay mga pagsusuri mula sa mga kritiko at iskolar ng pelikulang Filipino. Nangunguna dito ang panuntunan ng Iginagalang nating si Dr. Nic Tiongson na "Paano Nga Ba Magbasa ng Pelikula Ngayon: Apat na Dulong sa Pagsusuri ng Pelikulang Filipino."

Kasunod ay ang fan essay ni Joi Barrios-Leblanc sa kaniyang version 2.0 ng klasikong sanaysay na "Kung Bakit Lagi Kong Pinapanood ang mga Pelikula ni Sharon Cuneta." At may muling pagkklates at pagpapahalaga sa dalawang Filipino film classics — ang *Sister Stella L.*, sa lente ni Dr. Patrick Flores; at *Himala*, sa sipat at bagong obra ni Pepe Diokno.

Mga tribute naman sa itinuturing na mga haligi ng pelikulang Filipino sa ikatlong bahagi. Isang napakahalagang sipi sa kumbersasyon ng dalawang Pambansang Alagad ng Sining sa Pelikula at Broadcast na sina Ricky Lee at Marilou Diaz-Abaya ang nakatampok. Kasunod ay ang paggunita ni Direk Joey sa kaniyang amang si National Artist Direk Eddie Romero na nagdiriwang ng ika-100 kaarawan sa taong ito. Ikinuwento naman ni Direk Lore Reyes ang mahigpit na directorial partnership nila ni Direk Peque Gallaga. Nahilingan din nating gunitain ang premiadong scriptwriter na si Amado Lacuesta sa panulat ng kaniyang anak na si Sarge, na ngayong 2024, ay pinasok na rin ang mundo ng pelikula bilang manunulat at producer. Magtatapos ang bahaging ito sa tribute sa tatlong itinatanging personalidad na ang paglisan ngayong 2024 ay lubos na ipinagdalamhati ng industriya at tumatangkilik ng pelikula: ang parangal ni Jose Javier Reyes kay Mother Lily Monteverde; ang pagpapahalaga ni Jim Libiran kay Sir Bing Lao; at ang paggunita ni Joel David sa ating ipinagmamalaking Cannes Best Actress na si Jaclyn Jose.



Ang ikaapat at huling bahagi ay pagpapahalaga sa mga artista at manggagawa sa pelikula. Nagmuni si Joel Saracho ng League of Filipino Actors o AKTOR hinggil sa tungkulin ng artista sa ngayon sa loob, at mas importante pa, sa labas ng mundo ng pelikula. Ipapaliwanag naman ni Ms. Boots Anson Roa-Rodrigo ang limampung taong pagmamalasakit ng MOWELFUND sa pangangalaga sa kapakanan at pagsusulong ng karapatan ng mga manggagawa sa industriya ng pinilakang-tabling.

Matatapos ang isyu ng journal na ito sa napakapersonal na danas ng mga pinakamasusugid at pinakamatatapat na fans nina Superstar Nora Aunor at Star for All Seasons Vilma Santos na sina Albert Sunga at Jojo Lim. Bukod sa mga nakatutuwang mga kuwento, ibinahagi rin nila ang kanilang inilingatang koleksiyon ng memorabilia ng kanilang mga idolo.

Ang bawat seksiyon ay minamarkahan ng mga taludtod at talinghagang lalong nagpapatingkad sa pagiging likhang-sining ng pelikula. Kaya't nagpapasalamat tayo sa mga makatang nag-ambag ng kanilang mga tula - sina Sir Rio Alma, Krip Yuson, Frank Cimat, Giancarlo Abrahán, Edgar Samar, Khavn dela Cruz, Juanlyo Arcellana, at Jerry Gracio; at mga artists na nagbahagi rin ng kanilang larawan, likhang-sining, at film posters para sa natatanging isyung ito. At para sa espesyal na pabalat at iba pang obrang inilimbag sa isyung ito, nagpapasalamat ako kay Mark Justiniani, isang iiginagalang na social realist artist.





Bukod sa mga natatangi't importanteng mga sanaysay, akda, at likhang-sining na tinipon sa Journal na ito, bilang editor, ipinagmamalaki at ipinagkakapuri kong napagsama-sama natin ang iba't ibang indibidwal at sektor na may kinalaman sa pagbuo at pagdanas ng pelikula — ang mga artista, direktor, scriptwriter, kritiko at iskolar, artists, makata, at iba pang manggagawang pangkultura. Pinatitingkad nito ang katotohanan na ang paglikha ng pelikula ay isang gawain at hangaring kolektibo. At dahil dito, lagi sana nating maisaisip na ang kinabukasan ng pelikulang Filipino ay itatakda rin ng ating pangangarap at pagkilos na sama-sama.

MABUHAY ANG PELIKULANG FILIPINO!



SESSION 5



OCTOBER 2024 • 2:35 PM

FILM
FORWARD

THE IMPACT OF THE 2024 FILM INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

No amount of rain in severe tropical storm Trami (local name: Kristine) could stop the 2024 Film Industry Conference (FIC) last October 24 & 25, 2024 at the Lanson Place, Mall of Asia Manila.

RICA AREVALO



Spearheaded by the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), the FIC was established in 2017 to provide Filipino filmmakers and media practitioners with a platform on which to discuss the state of the Philippine film industry, the goal being to improve the quality of Filipino films.

It gathered film industry experts, professionals, educators, and stakeholders to address the challenges faced and the future of the Philippine cinema.

In the 2024 edition, the FIC was opened to local and international audiences. The conference consisted of sessions that tackled aspects of filmmaking that have an impact on the Philippine film industry, on both local and global scales. Moreover, to extend the reach of the conference, the sessions were accessible to online audiences via livestream.

All sessions of the FIC were free of charge and held in a hybrid format, with online and onsite sessions.



The FIC Objectives were the following:

- ▶ To serve as a tool for the recovery of the industry as well as addressing and bridging the gaps between the PH film industry and the international market.
- ▶ To share and discuss the latest trends, opportunities, and platforms with filmmakers through international and local experts.
- ▶ To provide free access to interested participants who want to acquire knowledge in the film industry through the Public Sessions.
- ▶ To provide a platform to further explore opportunities, challenges, and new norms in the film industry.
- ▶ To create synergy among participating filmmakers in the industry.

For Day 1, the first session, "Here's the Tradecraft: How to Safeguard the Intellectual Properties of Filipino Filmmakers" had panelists Atty. Amanda Marie F. Nograles from the Department of Trade and Industry, Atty. Ma. Janice Tezano from De La Salle - College of Saint Benilde and lawyer Louie Andrew C. Calvario from the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL).

The session served as an introduction to the intellectual property rights attached to the works of the filmmakers, including key players like writers, musicians, and others.

Calvario reiterated, "*Kailangan kung ikaw ay isang author, scriptwriter ka or composer, dapat sa iyo i-attribute ang work* (It should be the case that, if you are an author, script-writer or composer, that the work should be attributed to you)."

With film as essentially a collaborative undertaking, the session addressed the layers of rights that relate to the different elements of film production as well as the rights of the creative contributors as to their inputs in a film.

Fair use was also discussed by Atty. Nograles: "If the usage is fair, the author should be recognized," she said. "*Kung sa classroom lang, for educational purposes, hindi naman siya for public use, walang commercial value, and you recognize the author, whoever owns the copyright, the general rule is pwede na iyon, that is fair use.*" This discussion was moderated by Paul Sta. Ana of the Filipino Screenwriters Guild (FSG).

Session 2 dubbed "Highlighting Regional Cinema: Dissecting the Diverse Films of the Philippine Islands" introduced the audience to the dynamic and successful regional film festivals that have partnered with the local government units of their respective provinces.

From the thousands of islands in the Philippines, hundreds more produced narratives were made through film. SINEiksik Bulacan was represented by May Arlene Torres, Hundred Islands Film Festival was headed by film festival director Dr. Raquel Rivera, with Tito Valiente of the Manunuring Pelikulang Pilipino discussing the importance of these regional film festivals, with Butch Ibañez of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) moderating.

The conference dissected the distinct regional realities that have been depicted in regional films over recent years. The discussion focused on the culture and language that the films show and cultivate, resulting in probing the rootedness and experiences of specific locales.

Both Torres and Rivera discussed how they highlighted the importance of the exhibitions of Filipino films rooted in different regions, letting their filmmakers create original works and exhibiting them in film festivals abroad.

For Session 3, "Screen to Stream: Examining the Cinema-to-Platform Release Model", it was a show of force from Madonna Tarrayo of UxS Unitel StraightShooters and Ronald Arguelles as VMX Head of Content Aggregation and moderated by professor Jag Garcia.

With the rise of streaming services, film distribution has adapted to the times by in-

troducing a hybrid model for releasing movies. In this session, Tarrayo and Arguelles shared the chain and process of an effective cinema-to-streaming distribution release and how this can improve the marketing of films to the general audience. They identified the trends and factors when planning the distribution through the theatrical-to-digital model.

On October 25, Session 4: "Future from Film Past: The Role of Film Archiving & Restoration in the Progress of Philippine Cinema" focused on safeguarding our history, and by extension, our nation's cultural heritage for the future generation.

In this session, film restoration experts like Leo Katigbak, Don Arawan, Ricky Orellana and Jeffrey Sonora discussed the role of film archiving and restoration in service of the Philippine cinema and why this was an important national endeavor.



FILM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES



Through their initiatives, hundreds of lost films have been found and shared with the general public. They also shared the challenges faced by people involved in film archiving, and the opportunities such activities would bring to the film industry. The discussion was hosted by actor Jun Subayton. The bottom line: film archiving and preservation is an important mission for our Philippine cinema, heritage and history. The session also sought to compel organizations and media practitioners in the mission of film restoration and archiving in the country.



Government took the centerstage for Session 5: "Cinematic Support: Insights on the Intersection of Government and Cinema." Panelists included Joann C. Bañaga and Atty. Paulino S. Cases, Jr. of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board, Butch Ibañez of the National Commission for the Culture and the Arts, Paolo Villaluna of the Film Academy of the Philippines and Jose Javier Reyes of the FDCP.

Government agencies played significant roles in cultural, economic, and academic areas of film. Policies and regulations established by these agencies shaped the film industry by encouraging production through funding and grants; fostering cultural exchange through international relations and co-productions; developing talents and projects through education and training; and creating economic growth through tourism.

In this session, the discussion navigated the roles of government agencies in the production and exhibition of films.

Villaluna reiterated to the government bodies the work of documentary filmmakers: "Documentaries are like opinion pieces," he said. "You are not required to take both sides. You are not required to be factual. They are opinion pieces of a filmmaker. Documentaries are part of self-expression. It is not a news report." The moderator for this session was educator Seymour Sanchez.

The last session tackled "Co-Production and Globalization: The Future of International Filmmaking" with moderator Percival Intalan, panelists Jorie Ann Pacumio (FilmPhilippines Office), Bianca Balbuena (Epicmedia Productions), Wilfredo Manalang (Fusee), and Danzen Santos-Katanyag (Digital Dreams Inc.).

The collaborative nature of filmmaking aims to achieve a shared vision that transcends cultural and language barriers. Cinema's universal language affects people's lives positively and distinctively, evoking emotions and views that no words can explain.

The discussion emphasized how international co-production strengthened this by combining financial resources, allowing government incentives to be accessed, making envisioned locations attainable, and reaching broader markets.

These collaborations allowed films to cross and surmount cultural borders, proving that cinema knows no boundaries. The producers shared what makes an efficient producer when entering an international co-production deal.

FDCP Chairman and CEO Jose Javier Reyes stated in his closing remarks that both streaming and cinema theaters can co-exist: "Today we discussed the importance of international co-production and the role of the government in making sure that Philippine cinema will go the right direction."

"One thing is very significant and important—we must recognize that we must all work together in order to bring Philippine cinema to its new heights. *Hindi ito trabaho ng gobyerno lamang, hindi ito trabaho ng producers lamang, o ng ibang creatives, dapat magsama sama tayo.*"

"If we work as one common force, [move in] one direction, then we can achieve the goal we are eventually aspiring. We can do it. The creative genius is in the DNA of the Filipino," the FDCP Chairman and CEO said.



Rica Arevalo

is a filmmaker, professor and a columnist (Zoom In) for the Arts and Culture section of the Manila Bulletin. Currently, she is the Head of Education at the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP).

WHY DO
WE KEEP
PRODUCING
FILMS?



PERCI INTALAN

WHY?



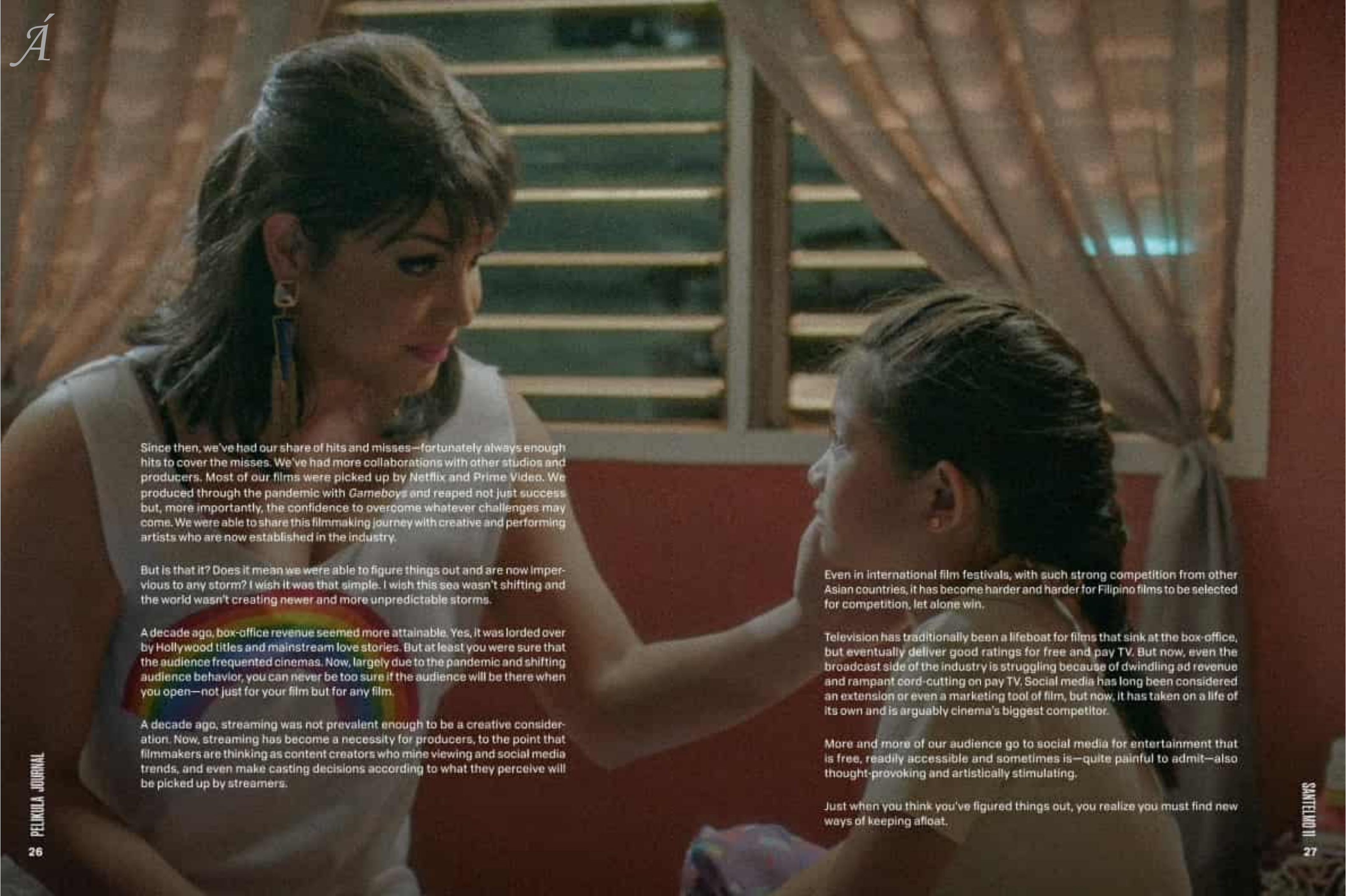
I get asked this question a lot. Why do we bleed ourselves dry, financially, emotionally, sometimes literally, just to produce a film? Of course, we can wax poetic about the fulfillment you get creating something out of a mere idea—something that can inspire, that can empower, that can change lives of one person in that audience, something that can be a catalyst for positive change in the world. Yeah, that's all true and good. But...well, there's always a "but."

I count myself lucky. For two decades, I worked in television and the realities of the business were very much drilled in our minds every day: brainstorming, budgets, presentations, pilots, presentations again, hand-to-mouth telecast dates, ratings, sales revenue, research, presentations again, then repeat again and again and again. By 2012, just when I was feeling very burnt out, we had the chance to make an independent film and, suddenly, I saw a utopian world where we can make stories that are not bound by numbers, where I didn't have to worry about what sales wants, and we had no considerations like people switching channels if you don't start with a big scene or add cliffhangers to keep them glued.

With our first film, *Bwakaw*, we were buoyed by kindred spirits in Cinemalaya and the independent film community. We rode the wave of Asian Indies being selected at major international film festivals—making it to Toronto, Tokyo and, even, the golden edition of the New York Film Festival. *Bwakaw* was selected as the Philippine entry to the Oscars that year and we were on a high. We followed this with *Barber's Tales*, then *Dementia* then *Arino sa Likod ng Buwan*. The accolades kept coming and we felt our horizons broaden. We found the freedom we needed to push creativity and speak our truths.

But we were swimming in an open sea, exposed to the elements... and reality. There were not enough returns to keep investing in new projects. We were lucky to have found benefactors who supported us, but it was not sustainable. Fortunately, at this point, we started working with the big studios, and we stepped back and revisited everything we learned from our broadcasting background.

Now that we were able to find our artistic footing, we were able to marry what we learned with what we wanted to try. It all came together when we dared to do a film about a transgender woman and dreamed of becoming a box-office hit — and that was *Die Beautiful*, which became a top grosser of the 2016 Metro Manila Film Festival.



Since then, we've had our share of hits and misses—fortunately always enough hits to cover the misses. We've had more collaborations with other studios and producers. Most of our films were picked up by Netflix and Prime Video. We produced through the pandemic with *Gameboys* and reaped not just success but, more importantly, the confidence to overcome whatever challenges may come. We were able to share this filmmaking journey with creative and performing artists who are now established in the industry.

But is that it? Does it mean we were able to figure things out and are now impervious to any storm? I wish it was that simple. I wish this sea wasn't shifting and the world wasn't creating newer and more unpredictable storms.

A decade ago, box-office revenue seemed more attainable. Yes, it was lorded over by Hollywood titles and mainstream love stories. But at least you were sure that the audience frequented cinemas. Now, largely due to the pandemic and shifting audience behavior, you can never be too sure if the audience will be there when you open—not just for your film but for any film.

A decade ago, streaming was not prevalent enough to be a creative consideration. Now, streaming has become a necessity for producers, to the point that filmmakers are thinking as content creators who mine viewing and social media trends, and even make casting decisions according to what they perceive will be picked up by streamers.

Even in international film festivals, with such strong competition from other Asian countries, it has become harder and harder for Filipino films to be selected for competition, let alone win.

Television has traditionally been a lifeboat for films that sink at the box-office, but eventually deliver good ratings for free and pay TV. But now, even the broadcast side of the industry is struggling because of dwindling ad revenue and rampant cord-cutting on pay TV. Social media has long been considered an extension or even a marketing tool of film, but now, it has taken on a life of its own and is arguably cinema's biggest competitor.

More and more of our audience go to social media for entertainment that is free, readily accessible and sometimes is—quite painful to admit—also thought-provoking and artistically stimulating.

Just when you think you've figured things out, you realize you must find new ways of keeping afloat.



SO, WHY?

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?

Because paradoxically, there has never been a more exciting time.

True, audiences cannot be expected to always be there at cinema lobbies. But when they do come, they arrive in droves. At a time when the Philippine box office is struggling, we have *Rewind*, our biggest ever box-office hit from the biggest earning Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) so far. We thought MMFF was the only set of playdates we could produce hits, but recently, *Un/Happy For You* proved us wrong, and even foreign movies surprised us—like the almost P90M opening of *Inside Out 2*, the third biggest opening film of all time here in the Philippines, or surprise hits such as *How To Make A Million Before Grandma Dies*. So, there is an audience out there. They're harder to convince perhaps, but they are there—and there are many of them.

Asian films are spreading across the globe and are no longer niche. Of course, Korea has been leading the wave, but now even Vietnam has such strong potential that they can open films day-and-date across the United States. Yes, the Philippines is lagging in this, but we know now that it can be done, and that Hollywood no longer has a chokehold on the global market.

Meanwhile, audience exposure to streaming proved that we could veer away from formulaic materials. I was surprised when our 2013 film *Barber's Tales* was released on Netflix and made it to the Top 3 films of that week—reaching a far bigger audience than the film ever got a decade before. We never thought a 10-year-old film could still find its audience. Indeed, it is a new world.

Broadcast television may be struggling, but more digital platforms are sprouting left and right, and some are starting to whet their appetites on film. It is truly very competitive—and maybe films need to be tailor fit to some of these platforms—but there is a market, and that's always a good thing.

And so, here we are, the people who fall so much in love with a really good story that we lose sleep figuring out how to raise the money, how to assemble the right team and the right cast, how to film even at the height of a typhoon, how to make it to the right release date or the right festival premiere, or both, how to convince an audience to watch, and hopefully how to close the right deals and make the right amount of money to be able to do the whole thing all over again for the next really good story.



It doesn't make sense, I know. While we producers are at the mercy of a very elusive audience in a constantly volatile market, other industries have much less risk and better ROI. I sometimes joke that if I left my money in the bank, it might earn more from interest in the amount of time I spent making and releasing a film.

But the world needs its mad dreamers. Particularly in this country of ours where odds seem to always be stacked against us. We need creators who will take risks and prove that there is a way through the storm. Standing still and doing the same thing again and again will get us nowhere—and we can't afford that, especially when we know the world is opening to us.

Maybe I am just over-reaching on the importance of what we do as filmmakers, but I'd like to think this is where we have an integral role to play, and why we must keep doing what we do. Our films are a way to show the capacity of our imagination and ingenuity, and this is the mark of a people who know we can achieve more and do deserve more.



Perci Intalan

is a director-producer and Company President, The IdeaFirst Company and the President of the Film Producers Guild of the Philippines.

FIXING FLAT TIRES

2005 was the watershed year when independent digital cinema broke into mainstream consciousness: hundreds of new voices surfaced, brave narratives were being told, and digital cinema became a legitimate and accessible form of expression for the general public. It has to be said that prior to 2005, there were already brilliant digital films being made—but it was in 2005 when it became a generational movement for the then fledgling format. It was at the height of that year when a handful of filmmakers created a community in the form of a cooperative (Independent Filmmakers' Cooperative/IFC) to manage a commercial movie theater called IndieSine. Apart from the alternative cinema filmmakers community of the Mowelfund Film Institute, IFC was the first time I witnessed filmmakers and film workers from the industry getting together in hopes of creating a sustainable program for themselves.

PAOLO VILLALUNA

Across the years, as I started working in both the independent and mainstream sectors of the film industry, I found myself witnessing, and experiencing, several instances in which film workers, filmmakers and industry stakeholders became a collective voice to raise their sector's concerns, the last of which involved the recent COVID-19 pandemic where cinema, and its film workers, would be among the most economically-affected industries in the Philippines.

INTER-GUILD ALLIANCE

It was during this pandemic that several film guilds and stakeholders decided to proactively come together and create a private-sector organization, a network of film guilds to assist each other, create a collectively agreed-upon set of professional protocols so we could work despite the pandemic, and lobby our professional concerns to the government. It was called the Inter-Guild Alliance (IGA), and it was, by and large, successful—we created a professionally and community-accepted set of protocols. IGA successfully lobbied for film workers to be regarded as essential workers during the pandemic. We even set up a vaccination program for our members and, most importantly, we united over 15 film guilds and motivated other professionals of the film industry without representation to create their own guilds.

This effort was not without its limitations: we were all working as volunteers, and our day jobs as active workers in the film industry would sometimes hinder us from doing more for our community.

In an ideal world, there is an umbrella organization of film guilds supported by the government so film workers can concentrate on their jobs.

Ironically, there actually is.

The Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP) is a quasi-government agency that serves as the umbrella organization of various film guilds in the Philippines. It was established in 1981 under a Presidential Executive Order that provided FAP with the mandate of supervising film guilds to optimize competency, give out annual awards (called the Luna Awards), and is the official Philippine selection body for the Oscars. Anecdotally, FAP has had very good functional decades and it did protect and assist film guilds. But, through the years, due to limited resources and some challenges in its decision-making processes, it has become an organization in need of calibration.

The car is still functional, but the tires, they need repair and the engine needs an overhaul.

FILM ACADEMY OF THE PHILIPPINES REBORN

This year, a new Executive Order (EO No. 70) issued on October 2, 2024 was signed by the President to help revitalize the Film Academy of the Philippines: among the major changes, FAP is now a legitimate government agency under the supervision of the Department of Trade and Industry, and FAP will receive a budget directly from government coffers as opposed to its previous design, where it obtained its budget from percentages off an annual film festival.

There will also be an overhaul: the Director-General is tasked to restructure the Academy, and to propose a program to be approved by a Board of Trustees composed of several relevant government organizations.

Since the film industry is still struggling to get on its feet from the COVID pandemic, it is highly appreciated that the government sees the value of revitalizing the Film Academy, and bolster its mandate to assist our guilds, among others.

In a simplified summary, The FAP is a government-run cultural organization that acts as an umbrella organization for film industry guilds in the Philippines and is directed to guide, assist, and steer representative guilds, organizations and/or associations in various creative and technical sectors towards the professionalization of the Philippine Film Industry. It is tasked to assist with capacity-building, educational programs, assistance, training and other incentive programs for the welfare and professionalization of film workers in the Philippine Film Industry.

The Academy also has the function of giving due recognition to outstanding motion pictures, artists and relevant stakeholders with the end in view of revitalizing and further promoting the Philippine Film Industry.

In addition, the FAP is hereby authorized to establish an independent committee for the selection of official Philippine nominee/s to the Academy Awards or the Oscars.

There are six operational units being proposed for the structure, namely: Guild Development, Legal Help Desk, Special Projects (for the awards and Oscar selection), Education and Research, Communications and Finance/Administration.

Let me share with you the objectives of the first two proposed units.

GUILD DEVELOPMENT

I'm a firm believer in film guilds: as freelancers, film industry workers are not allowed to create unions—guilds and organizations are the closest the sectors of the industry can legally come to organizing themselves to represent their concerns. As workers, our concerns are varied and complex: they range from labor rights to creative issues, even concerns on socio-political injustice.

We are all aware of the cultural and economic advantages of a healthy cinema, and these include ensuring that the people behind creating stories are also properly cared for.

It is crucial for a government that takes its cultural investment seriously to support and empower guilds for the following reasons:

- **Professional Standards and Quality:** Film guilds set standards for the industry and its members. They ensure that work within the film industry meets a certain level of quality by enforcing rules on training, qualifications, and the ethical treatment of members. This results in higher quality productions, as professionals are held to these standards.
- **Advocacy and Rights Protection:** guilds advocate for better working conditions and the rights of their members.
- **Cultural Preservation and Representation:** film guilds play a role in promoting diversity and representation in cinema. By supporting these guilds, one supports the storytelling that reflects diverse backgrounds, which is essential for cultural preservation, understanding, and appreciation. This alignment with cultural values ensures that films continue to be a mirror to society, promoting empathy and awareness.
- **Economic Stability for Workers:** by securing better pay and conditions, guilds provide economic stability for their members. This stability is crucial in an industry known for its feast-or-famine work patterns, ensuring that film professionals can plan for their future with some security.
- **Education and Training:** guilds often provide education, training, and networking opportunities for their members, which are vital for career development. This not only benefits the individual, but also raises the overall skill levels within the industry, fostering innovation and excellence.
- **Collective Bargaining Power:** guilds offer a unified voice for their members in negotiations with studios and production companies. This collective bargaining strength ensures that filmmakers and crew members are not just seen as replaceable cogs but as professionals who deserve fair treatment.
- **Industry Influence and Policy:** through their collective power, guilds can influence industry policies, technological adoption (like how new media formats are handled), and even broader cultural policies related to film and media, ensuring that evolving industry standards do not leave workers behind.

- **Cultural Impact and Social Change:** films are powerful tools for social change. Guilds can push for narratives that challenge norms, promote underrepresented voices, and address critical social issues, thereby playing a role in societal evolution through storytelling.
- **Community and Networking:** for many in the film industry, guilds are not just about professional benefits, but also about community. They provide a network where members can share experiences, support new talent, and foster an environment where creativity thrives.
- **Government support for film guilds** through the Film Academy transcends immediate economic benefits to include cultural, social, and ethical dimensions, making it a pillar of not just the film industry but of cultural heritage and social progress.

LEGAL (GRIEVANCE) HELP DESK

Another legal milestone this year involving the film industry is the passing of the Eddie Garcia Law, a law that puts regulations on the film industry's working and safety conditions that include working hours, payments, etc.

Since the film industry, like other specialized industries, can be very complicated, a legal help desk unit handled by a government agency that is knowledgeable of the film industry's nuances and complexities can aid in the internal arbitration of grievances. It must be noted that FAP's legal help desk doesn't take away anyone's right to file a complaint directly to the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) or to the proper courts.

The purpose of a legal help desk and arbitration for film workers include:

- **Dispute Resolution:** arbitration serves as an alternative to traditional court litigation for resolving conflicts. For film workers, disputes might include contract disagreements, payment issues, rights over creative works, or workplace grievances. Arbitration can provide a quicker, and often, less formal process than court proceedings, which are tailored to the specifics of the film industry.
- **Cost-Effective and Time-Efficient:** legal battles through conventional courts can be both expensive and lengthy. Arbitration aims to reduce these costs and expedite dispute resolution, which is crucial in an industry where time is money and project timelines are tight.
- **Privacy:** unlike court proceedings which are public, arbitration offers confidentiality. For film workers, especially those involved in high-profile projects or dealing with sensitive content, maintaining privacy can be critical to protect professional reputations or proprietary information.

- **Specialized Expertise:** Arbitrators in film industry disputes often have specific knowledge or experience in entertainment law, which can lead to more nuanced decisions that consider industry standards, practices, and norms that might not be fully understood in a general court setting or in the labor law courts.
- **Flexibility:** arbitration allows for more flexible procedural rules tailored to the needs of the parties involved. This can include how evidence is presented, the location of proceedings, and even the involvement of technical experts or industry professionals in the arbitration process.
- **Preventing Strike Actions:** during times of industry-wide disputes or strikes, arbitration or mediation can serve as a tool for negotiation, potentially averting or resolving strikes by providing neutral ground for dialogue and resolution, as seen in various posts discussing the use of arbitration or mediation to address broader industry conflicts.
- **Legal Help Desk:** specifically for film workers, a legal help desk might offer initial consultations, advice on contracts, or guidance on employment rights. This service can be crucial for freelancers or non-union workers who might not have regular access to legal advice, helping them understand their rights, negotiate contracts, or navigate arbitration processes.

This is just the beginning. There's more to come from the reborn Film Academy of the Philippines.



Paolo Villaluna

a filmmaker and former president of the Directors' Guild of the Philippines (DGP) and co-founder of The Inter-Guild Alliance (IGA), was recently appointed as Director General of a revitalized Film Academy of the Philippines (FAP). He shares with us the programs that the new government office plans to undertake.



LOST SABUNGEROS

GMA PICTURES and publicaffairs

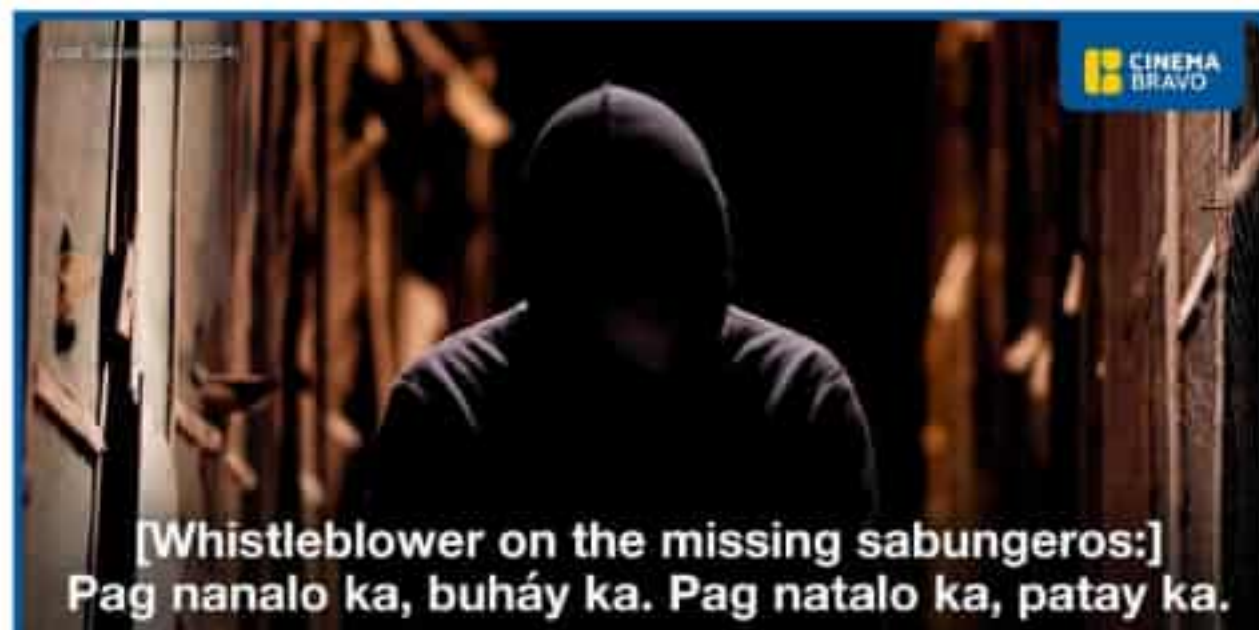
NESSA S. VALDELLON
(LOST SABUNGEROS' EXECUTIVE PRODUCER)

A Documentary Saga Involving Cockfighters, the Cinemalaya ... and a Crocodile?

This is the story behind the documentary film *Lost Sabungeros*, a documentary that almost didn't screen.

The MTRCB didn't want to rate it — for fear of sub judice. Streamers didn't want to acquire it — for being too political. And the country's premiere independent film festival, Cinemalaya, canceled it — for unnamed security reasons.

What would make *Lost Sabungeros* so controversial?



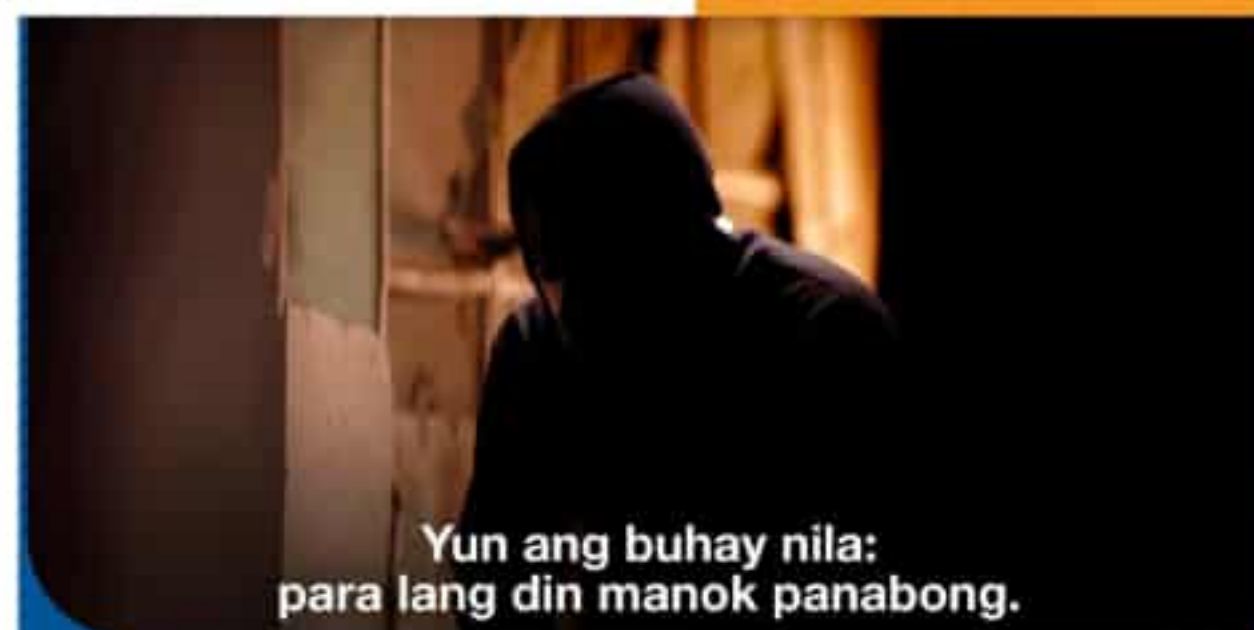
Cockfighting controversy

To answer this, we have to go into the big business that is cockfighting. The bloody and brutal sport, which has long been illegal in many countries, is a huge source of revenue for both gambling lords and the Philippine government.

When the pandemic shut down cockfighting arenas in 2021, the game transitioned online. During this time, the government earned a staggering 640 million pesos in taxes every month from electronic cockfighting or e-sabong. This was a drop in the bucket compared to the three billion peso monthly revenue earned just by Lucky 8 Star Quest, the e-sabong firm of gaming consultant Charlie "Atong" Ang. Lucky 8 was the biggest, but certainly not the only, e-sabong operator.

The shocking amounts of cash involved in e-sabong became a magnet for greed, petty thievery and in the end, violence beyond the fighting cocks.

In a televised video in 2021, Atong Ang accused unnamed cockfighters of rigging the electronic games and mirroring his official online platform, Pitmasters Live. He noted that, by doing this, they were stealing not only from him but from the government. He also issued a warning, "Ang daming tarantado. Di niyo ba nailisip yung ginagawa nating tulong sa gobyerno? Tigilan niyo na yung kalokohan niyo. Pag hindi kayo tumigil ... tignan niyong maigi kung anong mangyayari sa inyo (There are so many assholes here. Don't you realize how much we're helping the government? Quit jerking around! If you don't stop ... better watch out for what's coming to you)."



Within months, 34 *sabungeros* disappeared — majority of them last seen at cockfighting arenas owned by Lucky 8. A few more were abducted off the streets, or from their homes.

To the families of the victims, this was no coincidence after Ang's public threat.

From one year to three

GMA Public Affairs began work on the documentary *Lost Sabungeros* in January of 2022. It was expected to be the first full length film documentary to be released by GMA Pictures, with an estimated one year timeline.

It took almost three years before it found an audience.

Early on, director Bryan Brazil and his team were warned by families of the victims to not trust anyone, as they could not tell who was the enemy and who was in on the crime. Brazil shared that, "Nobody wanted to speak out and become the next target. It took a lot of convincing to get the major subjects on camera and trail them as they searched for clues, for answers and bodies."



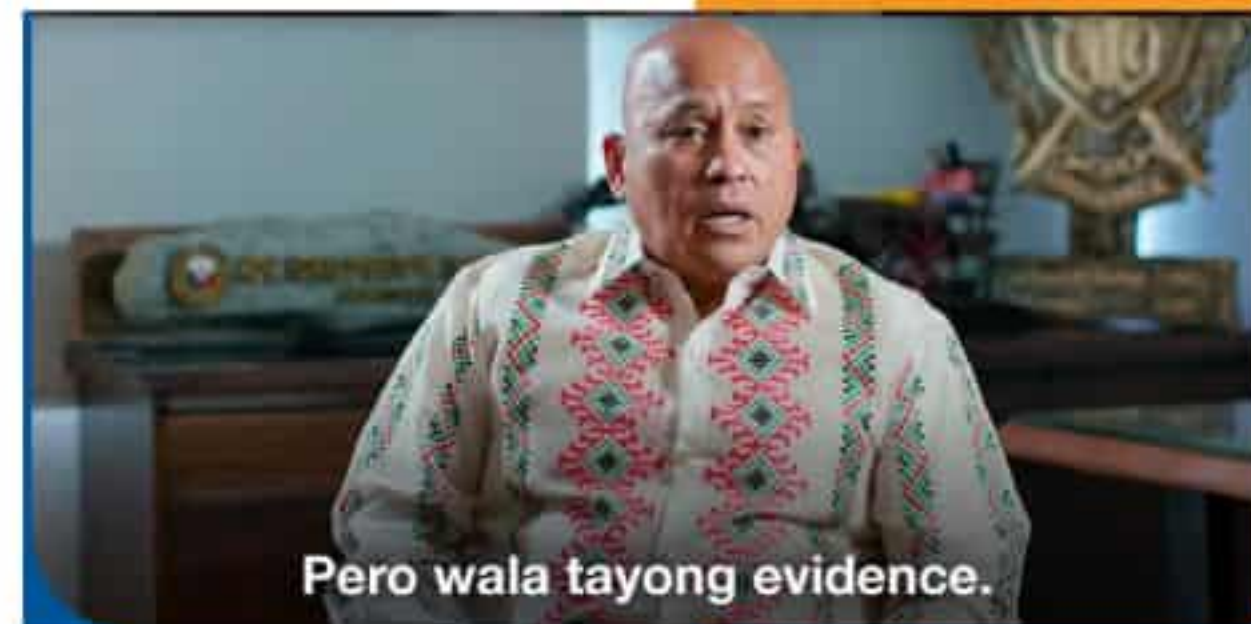


Eventually this distrust of people, particularly those in authority, proved to have basis.

Princess, one of the documentary subjects, watched as her partner Jon Lasco was arrested in their own home, by men claiming to be from the National Bureau of Investigation. They turned out to be members of the Laguna police force. These same policemen were also found to have taken men from the cockfighting arena in Sta. Cruz, Laguna.

Meanwhile, the *Lost Sabungeros* team was covering an investigation that appeared not as thorough as it could have been. Soon after a group of *sabungeros* went missing, a white van was found with their bags and some of their clothing. Oddly enough, no fingerprints were collected from the van.

Co-writer and producer Zoliet Paris notes, "When we were tracing CCTV footage in the areas where the victims were abducted, we discovered there were cameras in some of the barangays. Apparently the authorities did not gather the footage and by the time we got there, they had been erased. This could have served as evidence."



Unimaginable cost

Butch Inonog, a longtime *sabungero*, built his empire around cockfighting — never imagining it would cost him his son John Claude. Butch appeared to be the potential hero of the documentary, making fiery speeches while leading the other families in their quest for justice. He was also first to file a case — as his son, while being abducted, was still able to call and provide the names of the three security personnel who had taken him and his party from the Manila Arena.

But in an unexpected twist, Butch was personally accused by Ang of being a game fixer during the Senate hearings on the missing *sabungeros*. Two years into the documentary process, Butch was no longer returning our producers' calls. He eventually desisted from pursuing the case against his son's abductors.

GMA waited a long time for the Senate and Department of Justice investigation to progress, feeling the documentary needed some form of closure to be complete. But, instead of the cases progressing, one complainant after another withdrew, including our major subjects.





It never ends. *LOST SABUNGEROS* applied for MTRCB review - so we can be screened on television and in select commercial cinemas. But the MTRCB will still not review us due to concerns about sub judice. They were kind enough to explain the next steps in this process, however. We will comply and hopefully get our rating someday. Meanwhile, grateful for the schools that invited the docu for special screenings (With our director Bryan, producer Tolits and legal counsel Atty. Vinny).

This caused our already stressed and exhausted documentary team to almost give up. The official movie poster does not contain the names of anyone in production as they became afraid of revealing their identities. Some of them used aliases in the closing credits of the film. One of our cameramen backed out from joining any more shoots, "Nawala nga ang mahigit 30 na walang kahirap-hirap... tayo pa kaya (It was that easy for over 30 people to go missing... what more us)?"

"Probably the saddest part is witnessing how this destroyed the lives of our subjects. We saw how they were isolated from friends and the rest of the world, how both fear and grieving without a body governed their lives," said producer Paris.

Leads, feelers, and a crocodile story

To shed light on what really happened to the 34 missing, we continued to receive leads and feelers from whistleblowers... just not on camera. Producer Tolits Tan described the long process before the documentary's main industry insider gave an interview: "It took weeks to get him to speak. There were conditions involved: shooting in a location far from prying eyes, distorting his voice and fully concealing his identity so as not to be identified by what he called the inner circle."

The interview turned out to be worth the wait. The insider claimed there were no traces of the missing because their chopped-up body parts had been fed to a giant crocodile. He added it came to a point where this crocodile was stuffed and could no longer stand the taste of human meat, forcing the killers to purchase a cremator instead. With this, victims were simply burned into ash.

While no official investigation could validate the crocodile story, it was chilling.

Cinemalaya and security concerns

We decided to finalize the documentary and submit it for consideration to the largest local independent film festival Cinemalaya. The world premiere was scheduled. Posters were on display and hundreds bought tickets. The day after the official trailer was released online, however, Cinemalaya canceled the *Lost Sabungeros* screenings. Their reason? Security concerns.

Executive Producer LJ Castel published a Facebook post that went viral after Cinemalaya's decision: "With the cancellation of *Lost Sabungeros*' screenings, who are we really protecting from security threats? Who are we saving from the documentary's revelations? The Cinemalaya Independent Film Festival is no longer free, is no longer independent."

Post-cancellation, GMA's management decided not to co-produce any more Cinemalaya entries, a sad turn of events given the network's history with the festival.

More importantly, the cancellation distressed relatives of the victims who kept fighting. Jaja, John Claude's partner, was in the early stages of pregnancy when our GMA crew met her. We were with her when she gave birth and when their child was baptized. When Jaja found out Cinemalaya would not screen *Lost Sabungeros*, she felt the families had lost their one real chance to be heard.

It was another heartbreak after a series of heartbreaks. While there was an outpouring of support, it felt like the film had reached a dead end, akin to the investigation itself.

The most chilling realization of the GMA team in the years of covering this story is unrelated to Cinemalaya, or even the alleged crocodile. It is this: that impunity on such a wide scale can still take place in modern-day Philippines. Thirty four people—all with some active role to play within the cockfighting industry—went missing. No body has been discovered. No victim has reappeared. No perpetrator has been found guilty of any crime. No justice has been served. And whatever was done can easily be done again, because there were no consequences.



Nessa Valdellon

is head of GMA Public Affairs and the concurrent Executive Vice President of GMA Pictures. With a line-up of films that include *Firefly*, *Green Bones* and *Lost Sabungeros*, she is rebuilding a film brand that aims to create new Philippine classics.

VIVA, viva max

"Masyadong matagal 'yung sex scene. P'wede pa itong iangat,"

feedback ng executive producer sa sinusulat kong script treatment ng episode ng bagong show ng Vivamax.

EN VILLASIS

Ang bagong show na ito ay anthology ng mga sex story na ang host ay ang kilalang adult content creator na si Salome Salvi. Kunwari podcast. May fictional na bisita na linterbiyuhin niya, at may re-enactment. Sa gitna ng pagkukuwento, nagbibigay ng kaniyang opinion ang sex guru na si Salome. Para siyang *Maalaala Mo Kaya* pero kangkangan. Mga kuwento ng benching, cuckolding, open relationship, day pass, at party and play; mga tema na hindi mapag-uusapan sa mainstream media.

Sa treatment ko, nasa ikasampung sequence pa ang sex scene. Matagal ito. Nasa ikasampung minuto o higit pa bago mapanood ang mapusok na laplapan, ang pagtalop sa damit, ang pagbuyangyang sa suso, at paghawak sa matatambok na puwit.

Depensa ko, ikatlong episode naman ito. Hindi naman ito pilot o unang episode na magdidikta ng timpla at takbo ng palabas. Mas may espasyo ako para paglaruan ang naratibo kaysa hayaang ibigay kung ano ang gusto ng mga subscriber.

Pero ipinilit ng EP na kailangang mas maaga pa dapat ipakita ang sex. Hindi nila kailangang mag-abang. Hindi nila kailangang sumakay sa kuwento. Mas mabilis nang mabagot ang mga manonood ngayon. Walá na silang pasensiya lalo na't sila ang may kontrol sa kanilang pinapanood. Hindi nila inaabangan kung ano ang susunod na mangyayari; ang importante sa kanila, may makita silang mga hubad na katawang nagrromansahan, mga mukhang inaabot ang ruok ng kaligayahan. Walang nagsasalsal para sa kuwento.

At sino naman ako para sumuway?

Kung maninindigan ako at ipaglalaban ang creative decision ko, sigurado maglalapag sila ng datos sa bawat pelikula at episode na ipinapalabas. Graph kung saan mas engaged ang mga manonood. Katulad ng progress bar na nasa ilalim ng video ng Youtube, nakikita nila kung ano-anong mga eksena ang paulit-ulit na nire-replay. At pupusta ako, mga sex scene ito.

Kaya ang unang sex scene sa unang draft ng treatment, ginawa ko nang unang eksena sa episode. Walá nang foreplay-foreplay, rekta na sa kung ano ang gustong mapanood ng mga manonood. Gusto ko lang na maisulat agad ang iskrip para mabayaran.

Pokpok ako bilang manunulat. Kung nasaan ang pera, nandoon ako. Kaka-shutdown lamang noon ng ABS-CBN. Walang kaseguraduhan kung magkakaroon pa ako ng kontrata sa susunod na taon. Ang ilan sa mga kasamahan ko, lumipat na ng network. May naiwan pa akong gagawing show kaya nagpalwan ako sa aking home network, o kung network pa bang maituturing ang ABS-CBN nang mawalan na ito ng

prangkisa. Kahit papaano, maitatawid ko ang susunod na taon ko dahil sa show na 'to.

Ilang linggo matapos kong magdesisyon na manatili sa ABS-CBN, na-shelf ang show. Kasagsagan pa rin noon ng pandemic at malabo pa rin ang guidelines nila para sa teyping. Natakot ang bidang artistang babae na magkasakit. Ayaw mahawahan ang mga kapamilyang may comorbidities. Naunawaan namin siya. Kailangang pangahalagahan ang kalusugan kaysa hanapbuhay. Mag-iisip na lang kami ng ibang konsepto at kuwento.

Pero matapos ang ilang linggo, malalaman namin na pumirma ng kontrata sa kabilang network ang bidang artistang babae. We feel betrayed sa ginawa niyang 'yun. Gigil ako sa ginawang pagtratraydor ng artistang 'yun. Kung sa usapang sex, ibinitin kami, at iniwang magsarili.

Bago ang shutdown, ilang ulit kaming miniting ng management. Sinigurado nilang prioridad nila kaming mga creative. Hindi nila kami pababayaang. Pero hindi ko maramdaman ang mga pangako na 'yun matapos kaming iwan ng artista. Nawalan ako ng gana na magsulat. Nawalan ako ng dahilan para magsulat sa kompanya. Unti-unting lumalabo ang pag-asa na mananatili pa rin ako dito.

Hanggang sa isang araw, nag-message sa akin si Roman Perez. Mainit na mainit si Roman sa Vivamax noon; sunod-sunod ang ginawa niyang pelikula para sa platform. Madalas, nagda-down ang server ng website sa tuwing maglalabas siya ng pelikula. Ang mga pinasikat na artistang babae sa Vivamax, una munang dumadaan sa kaniya. Parang baptism of fire pag nasalang sa set ni Direk Roman.

Bukod pa doon, si Roman ang isa sa mga pioneer director ng Vivamax. Siya ang nag-template sa kung ano ang pelikulang Vivamax: kakalat ang tamod, at sa dulo ng pelikula, bubulwak ng dugo.

Naging kaklase ko noon si Roman sa UP. Pareho kaming kumukuha ng masterado sa Malikhayang Pagsulat. Fokus niya noon ang dula. Ang una niyang pelikula sa Vivamax, *Taya*, ay hangò sa isang dula na isinulat at idinirehe niya. Naging short film din ito.

TOP 5 FILMS of Vivamax
based on views (2022)



Pero makaraan ang ilang sem, pareho naming hindi ipinagpatuloy ang MA. Ako, tuluyan nang nilamon ng pagsusulat ng mga teleserye, at siya bilang assistant director. Hanggang sa magkita kaming dalawa sa harap ng ELJ Communication Center. Palipat-ilpat na AD noon si Roman. Minsan nasa GMA, minsan sa TV5, at minsan, sa ABS.

Ang maikling kumustahan ay nauwi sa pagbibigay ng raket. May binubuong pelikula noon si Roman. Una niya bilang direktor. Ang prodyuser, mga magulang ng isang teen actor na siya ring magiging bida sa pelikula. Romance comedy ang gusto nila. May konsepto na sina Roman, ang kailangan niya lang ay magsusulat ng iskrip nitó.

Pumayag ako. Gusto ko ding magsulat ng pelikula. Ang totoo niyan, nakapagsulat na ako ng isang horror na pelikula. Ipinasa sa akin noon ni Jerry Gracio, tinapos ko, at matapos kong maibigay ang iskrip, hindi na ako nabalikan. Nawalan na ako ng balita hanggang sa isang kasamahan sa trabaho ang nagsabi sa akin na isino-shoot na ang pelikula. Nabigyan ako ng kredit bilang isa sa mga manunulat pero hindi ako nabayaran. Yung nakuha kong pera mula doon, inabono ni Jerry. Nahihiya siya sa akin kaya inabutan niya na lang ako.

Mabilis kong nagsulat ang romcom. Nai-shoot agad din nina Roman ang pelikula. Walá akong naging problema sa bayaran. May ilang araw itong ipinalabas sa Fishermall bago tuluyang na-pullout. Kahit papaano kumita nang kaunti ang pelikula. Ito ang una naming kolaborasyon ni Roman.

Matapos ito, nagbe-brainstorming kami ni Roman sa mga posibleng konsepto na maisasapelikula niya. May ilan din kaming nabuo. Bago magkapandemya, nagawa pa ni Roman ang pelikulang **Adan**. Isang erotic-thriller na pinagbibidahan ng dalawang babae. May manipulation, may violence, at siyempre, hindi mawawala ang sex, at sa pelikulang ito, mga girl to girl. Ito ang naging tiket ni Roman para mabigyan siya ng pansin ng mga big boss sa Viva, ang prodyuser at may-ari ng Vivamax.

Nakailang presentation pa kami noon sa Viva bago magpandemya. May mga na-approve na konsepto kami pero hindi pa magagawa.

Kasagsagan ng pandemya nang ilabas ng Viva ang Vivamax. Sarado ang mga sinehan, at walá ding palabas sa telebisyon maliban sa balita ng estadistika ng mga nagkakasakit at namamatay dahil sa COVID. Naging libangan ng karamihan ang panonood ng Netflix, Youtube, at kung ano-ano pang streaming app at website. Kahit ang ABS-CBN, lumipat sa Youtube para maipagpatuloy ang pagpapalabas ng mga programa.

At some point noong 2000s naging tanyag na awit ang "Internet is for Porn" mula sa puppet musical na *Avenue Q*. Walang ibang gamit ang internet kundi ang panonood ng porno. Hirit nga ng puppet na si Trekkie Monster, "Why you think the net was born? Porn, porn, porn!"

Noong 2023, sumusunod sa Estados Unidos ang Filipinas sa panonood ng porno sa popular na website na Pornhub. Ayon sa mismong datos nila, may labing-isang minuto at labinlimang segundo ang ginugugol ng isang Pinoy sa panonood. Tumaas ito at naging labing-anim na segundo mula noong nakaraang taon.

Malaking bahagi din ng mga nanonood ay kababaihan. Nasa 58%! Mas mataas pa kaysa kalalakihan. Patunay ba ito na nasa loob ang kulo ng mga Filipina? Na higit silang maiilbog kaysa kalalakihan? O sadyang hindi lang talagang magaling maglabing-labing ang ating mga kababayang lover boy?

Walá akong datos ng mga subscriber ng Vivamax, kung ilan sa mga ito ay mga babae, pero malinaw sa akin na kalalakihan ang main audience nila. Madalas sabihin ni Roman kapag nagkakakuwentuhan, mga seaman at OFW. Mga lalaking walá o madalang ang physical contact sa kanilang mga partner, girlfriend, o asawa. Mga lalaking napapalibutan ng mga kapuwa nila lalaki. Ang mga pelikulang Vivamax ay ginagawa para i-cater ang male fantasy.

Kaya laging highlight ang mga babaeng artista sa Vivamax. Sila ang pinapasikat, sila ang sinusundan. Dapat batá, dapat sariwa, mapusok, at walang arte. Ang mas mahalaga, maganda ang mukha at katawan. Kaya sinubaybayan sina AJ Raval, Angeli Khang, Ayanna Misola, at Azi Acosta. Sa apat na nabanggit na pangalan, si Angeli Khang lang ang hindi ko nakatrabaho.

Ang una naming proyekto ni Roman sa Vivamax ay isang series — *Iskandalo*. 10 episodes ito. Susubukan ng Vivamax na magpalabas ng series. Mas magastos ang paggawa nito kompara sa isang pelikula. Kung ang badyet ng isang pelikula ay 5 million, times three ang para sa serye. Pero dahil sampung episode naman ito, mas malaki ang kikitahin ng prodyuser lalo na kung lingguhan ang bagsak ng bawat episode.



Napansin kasi ng mga may-ari ng Viva ang trend sa mga subscriber nila noong panahon na 'yun. Hindi sila katulad ng Netflix at iba pang streaming app na monthly ang subscription, nag-offer ang Viva ng patingi-tinging subscription — may para sa 3 days, at meron ding lingguhan. Dahil dito, mas napansin nila na may ilang subscribers ang bumibili lang ng subscription kapag may gusto silang panooring pelikula o artistang babae. May mga kani-kaniyang bias din kasi ang mga manood — ang mas maalindog na si AJ Raval o ang bata na half-Korean na si Angeli Khang.

May ilan din ang inaabuso ang 7 days subscription para sa mga "bagong" subscribers. May mga manonood kasi na gagawa ng bagong account para makapanood nang libre. Bagong email address, bagong payment scheme. Walâ pang limang minuto makakanood ka na nang walang bayad. At sa tuwing may gusto silang panoorin, ganito lang din ang gagawin nila. Parang papasok sa loob ng sinehan na hindi sinisita ng mga takilyera. Malaking kawalan ito sa kita ng producer.

Para maiwasan ang ganito ipinagbabawal na technique, naisipan ng Viva ang magprodyus ng mga serye. Kung may sinusubaybayan sila linggo-linggo, tatamarin silang gumawa ng panibagong account, at mapipilitang ipagpatuloy na lamang ito. Handa din silang magbayad ng buwanang subscription fee.

Kayâ inihanda namin ang konsepto at ipinukol sa Viva. *Iskandalo* ang pamagat ng serye. Tungkol sa isang sikat na vlogger na naipit sa isang sex scandal at diumano nagpakamatay. Imbestigahan ang kaso hanggang sa ang bidang babaeng imbestigador ay mabitag sa sala-salabid na naratibo ng kasinungalingan at manipulasyon. Siyempre, hindi mawawalâ ang sex.

Opportunity ko na ito para makapagsulat ng noir. At bilang delikadesa, nagpaalam ako nang maayos sa mga boss ko sa ABS-CBN na hindi na ako magre-renew ng kontrata sa kanila. Isang malaking sugal ito sa parte ko.

Kasama ang isa pang writer ni Roman na si JC, isinulat namin ang iskrip ng *Iskandalo*. Required kami ng tatlong sex scene kada episode. Ito 'yung minimum. Puwede pa naming dagdagan kung sa tingin namin ay kailangan pa. Kailangang maging strategic ang paglalagay ng mga sex scene — meron dapat sa simula, sa gitna, at sa dulo. Dahil mas mahabâ ang running time sa pelikula, limang sex scene na naman ang kailangan dito. Meron ding major at minor sex scene. Major dahil mga bidang lalaki at babae ang nagrromansahan. Minor naman kung mga minor character ang involved.

Dahil bago pa, idealistic ako. Dapat integral ang sex scene sa mga kuwento. May mga kailangang i-reveal lalo na sa relasyon ng mga tauhan — may mga nagmamahalan, may mga naggagamitan, may purong tawag lang ng laman.

Sa unang draft namin, mas mapusok ang bida. May mga sex scene sana siya. Pero dahil sa naglilinis ang artista ng kaniyang imahen, dating beauty queen kasi at gusto nang seryosohin ang pag-arte, nakiusap siya sa mga prodyuser na baguhin ang character niya. In short, ayaw na niyang maghubad.

Nirespeto namin ang kagustuhan niya. Hand picked siya ng mga prodyuser para sa proyektong ito, at kapag tumanggî kami, bakâ mapurnada pa ang paggawa nito. Bakâ mauwi pa sa walâ ang pagsakripisyo ko sa trabaho ko sa sa dating network.

Pero mas napatunayan ko na sa industriyang ito, mas malaki ang bargaining chip ng mga artista kaysa creative. Samantala walâ naman silang magiging proyekto kung hindi sa mga manunulat at direktor. Unfair talaga pero kailangan mong magpakapokpok.

Dahil sa desisyon niyang ito, kinailangan naming kumambiyo (no pun intended) sa kuwento. Lahat ng sex scene na involved ang bida, tinanggal namin. Binawasan ang relasyon sa ibang character. Dinamihan ang sex scene sa ibang tauhan lalo na sa vlogger na pinatay na role na ginampanan ni AJ Raval.

Total, mainit ang pangalan at maraming tagasubaybay si AJ Raval, sa kaniya na namin ibinigay ang mga mainit na eksena. Dinamihan na lang namin ang flashback. Yung iba naman, ibinigay naman namin sa mga baguhang artista tulad nina Angela Morena at Ayanna Misola.

Naging maayos naman ang rewrite, at walang naging problema sa feedback sa script. Karamihan sa mga meeting namin sa Zoom lang ginaganap. Ni-raise lang ng isa sa mga prodyuser ang isang sex scene.

Matapos magulpi ang isang character, dinalâ siya sa ospital, doon dinalaw siya ng kaniyang ka-love team. Nag-aalala ito sa sinapit ng kapareha. Ang pag-aalala ay nauwi sa init ng katawan at tawag ng laman, at sa mismong hospital bed nila tinugunan ang kanilang pangangailangan.



Naaabsurduhan ang EP sa eksena. Talaga bang gagawin nilang mag-sex sa loob mismo ng ospital? Bakit hindi? Walâ namang pinipiling lugar ang libog, pagtatanggol ko. Hanggang sa makuwento ang ilang karanasan ng mga kakilala. Nagsimula na ding magbahagi ang ilan sa mga weird place kung saan puwedeng magtalik.

Sa pelikulang *Sitio Diablo*, sa bubong nagtalik ang mga karakter nila Azi Acosta at Benz Sangalang. Para silang mga pusang naglalampungan. Tungkol sa gang war, male ego, at machismo sa gitna ng kampanya ng eleksiyon at war on drugs ang *Sitio Diablo*. Ito ang ikalawa naming kolaborasyon ni Roman.

Bago pa magpandemya naaprubahan ang kuwento ng *Sitio Diablo*. Horror sana ito. Parang *Attack on the Block* ni Joe Cornish na pina-grit ng Tribu ni Jim Libiran, *Gangland* ni Peque Gallaga at Lore Reyes, at *Cidade de Deus* ni Fernando Meirelles at Katia Lund. Ang kuwento, habang nagpapatayan ang dalawang magkalabang gang, may isang demonyo ang dadating at papatayin silâ. Kinakailangan na magtulungan ang dalawang grupo para tuluyang magapi ang demonyo.

Ayaw ng mga prodyuser ang elemento ng demonyo. May mga nadinig akong kuwento na hindi fan ang matandang del Rosario ng mga pelikulang horror. Malas ang tingin niya dito. Kayâ tinanggal namin ang demonyo at nagfokus sa gang war. Gusto din nilang i-cast ang mga rapper na under management sa kanilâ.

Nang muli naming buhayin ang kuwento at ginawang pelikula, nilagyan na namin ng mga sex scene ito. Bilang dating action star ang kaniyang amâ, si AJ Raval ang gumanap na bidang babae. Nagawa na niya ang pinapangarap na pelikulang action.

Sa mismong premiere night sa Gateway Cinema nanood ang action star na si Jeric Raval. First time niyang manood ng pelikula ng anak. Pero noong nagsimula nang magpakita ng katawan si AJ, pasimple siyang lumabas ng sinehan. Marami ang nakapansin nito. Bumalik na lang siya nang papatapos na ang pelikula, nang nagsisimula na ang gang war.

Sa mga interbiyu niya, sinabi ng amâ na may kausap siya sa phone. May family emergency silâ kayâ kinailangan niyang lumabas. Hindi ko rin siya masisisi kung hindi ko kayang panoorin ang sariling anak na nagpapakita ng hubad na katawan sa pelikula.

Objectification ng kababaihan, at misogyny ang madalas na kritisismo sa Vivamax. Hindi ko ito itatanggi, at hindi ko ito ipinagmamalaki. Upang mag-appeal sa kalalakihan ang pelikula kailangang sipatin ito gamit ang matâ ng isang lalâki. Lagi-lagi chauvinistic ang pagtingin ng lalâki sa mga babae. Object ng desire o trophy na kailangang mapanaluhan.

Kapag ikinukuwento ko ang karanasan ko sa Vivamax, madalas pabiro. Pero kapag kinokompronta ako sa katotohanan na kabilang ako sa nangmamaliit at nag-exploit sa mga babae, tumatahimik ako at tinatanggap ito. Walâ akong dapat ipagtanggol. Ang totoo din naman kasi, nagsusulat ako para sa pera.

Noong pinili ko ang karera ng pagsusulat, kapalit sa lucrative at secured na trabaho sa information technology, ipinangako ko sa sarili ko na hindi dapat ako magutom. Kahit hindi nilâ sinasabi, ramdam ko ang disappointment ng mga magulang nang pinili kong maging writer. Walang yumayaman na writer sa Filipinas. Siguro kung maging national artist ka, pero kailan pa 'yun? Kapag ugod-ugod ka na o di kayâ pag patay ka na?

Kayâ kailangan kong panindigan ang desisyon na ito.

Pero nang magkaroon ako ng pagkakataong maka-collab (mulî, no pun intended) si Salome Salvi, may ilang aspekto ng sex ang nakilala ko. Power relation ang sex. Hindi lang ito ang pagtugon sa init ng katawan. May dominant at may sub. Ito ang naging tema ng buong anthology namin na *Ssshhh* by Salome Salvi.

Matapos ang feedback meeting namin, at pinagmumunihan ang gagawing rebisyon sa mga episode ng *Ssshhh*, saglit na pumasok sa isip ko ang realization: may power dynamics din sa industriya ng paggawa ng pelikulang Vivamax, at ako, isang sub. Hindi subscriber kundi submissive. Sunod-sunuran. Kung ano ang ipag-uutos, gagawin ko. Hindi para tugunan ang tawag ng laman kundi ng sigaw ng bulsa. Sasagutin ang lahat ng fantasy at fetish ng mga manonood, at hindi ko alam kung ano ang safe word.



Enrique Villasis

Si Enrique S. Villasis ay makata at manunulat sa pelikula at telebisyon. Ang kaniyang mga tula ay nagwagi sa mga pambansang patimpalak tulad ng Palanca, at Maningning Miclat. Nagsulat siya para sa ABS-CBN at kasalukuyang nagsusulat para sa *FPI's Batang Quiapo*. Nagsulat din siya para sa Vivamax ng mga pelikula't serye.



THE STRUGGLES OF PRODUCING ANIMATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

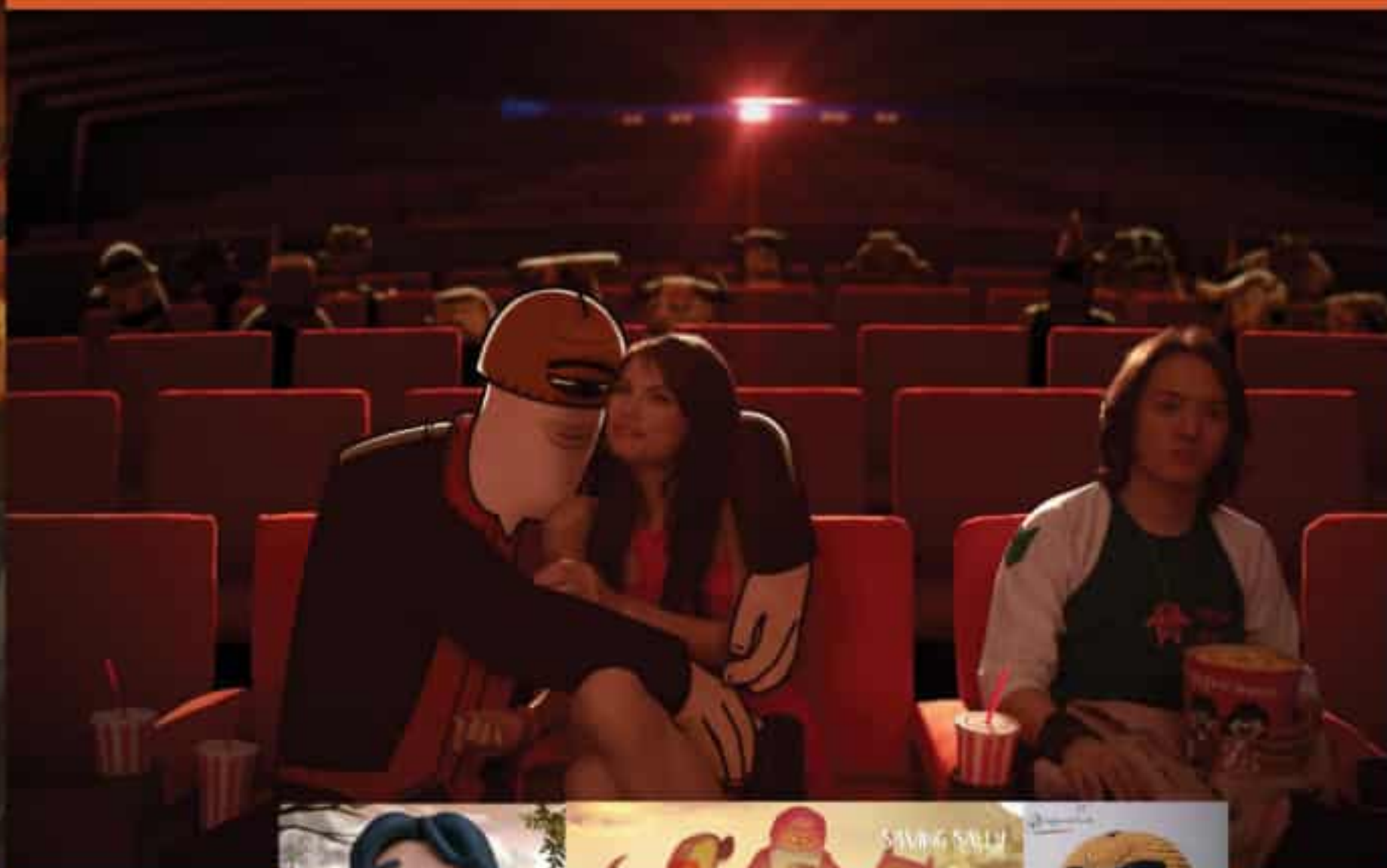
AVID LIONGOREN

My name is Avid Liongoren, director & producer for Rocketsheep, an indie animation studio. We are a small group of talented artists & smart dogs. We regularly do commissioned work for advertising so that we do not go hungry as we pursue our passion for producing our own films. We have made several short films through the years & have miraculously completed 2 features.



We have made several short films through the years and have miraculously completed two features. Our first film, *Saving Sally*, was a mix of live action and animation. It's about a boy, who secretly loves a girl, but the girl has a penis monster for a boyfriend. It was mostly self produced but was also made possible by the CNC French film fund. It took us 12 soul crushing years to make because of our lack of bulk cash at hand and our own inexperience making a VFX heavy film.

Thankfully, it had a theatrical run during the 2016 MMFF and won several awards in international genre film festivals. The most heartwarming part of birthing this film into the world was the cool fan art it inspired.



Despite the great feedback and acclaim, we didn't make enough money to make the 12 years of hard work worth it because we fumbled the worldwide distribution. We had no idea how to do that. We learned the very bitter lesson that making a film is just half the work. Selling it is an entirely different quest.



With the little money we made, we managed to start our second film. A soap opera satire about a pussycat torn between her two dog lovers titled *Hayop Ka!* This time we vowed not to make the same newbie mistakes. We attended different film labs both local and abroad where we learned from experienced mentors.

We soaked up how the industry worked in various international film markets. We partnered with Spring Films (*Kimmy Dora*, *Kita Kita*), who had much more experience with distribution and marketing. They were responsible for signing up stars to be part of our cast.



"Every scene is stunning and gorgeous. The character movements are smooth, and the backgrounds are fantastic to behold. The colors pop right off the screen, and Liongoren has a lot of fun with the medium, especially with a semi-superpowered rampage Roger goes on after finding out about Nimfa's unfaithfulness. Beginning to end, *Hayop Ka!* is a sight to behold, a true work of art in every frame."
 filmthreat.com

"One of *You Animal*'s strongest visual touches is the way it captures the class division between Nimfa and Inigo. Her world is all narrow streets and small apartments on the wrong side of the tracks, while Inigo lives in wealth and privilege. His mother's mansion boasts sweeping staircases and walls festooned with family portraits. It is the social criticism that seems truest to the telenovela's tradition and also lends an edge to the surrounding silliness, such as some vigorous, soft-focus sex scenes."
 screendaily.com

We also managed to complete the film in under four years. Hurray for progress! *Hayop Ka!* secured a festival premiere in Canada's Fantasia before it was even completed because they saw our work in progress. We were going to do the festival circuit first then come home to a Philippine theatrical run before selling to platforms. 2020 was going to be an awesome year for us.

But then the pandemic happened. All our distribution plans were destroyed. No festivals, no theaters, no sale of TV rights to ABS CBN because of the shutdown. To cut our losses, *Hayop Ka!* went straight to Netflix instead and had a wide Asian release. In 2021, it had a great festival run in the western world and won its share of awards. It was the



Robin Padilla
Roger



Maira Dela Torre
Inigo's Sister



Arci Muñoz
Jhermelyn



Robin Padilla
Papa Jorge



Sam Milby
Inigo Villanueva



Empoy Marquez
Jerry



Angelica
Panganiban
Nimfa Dimaano

They were responsible for signing up stars to be part of our cast.



first Filipino film to compete in Annecy, the most prestigious animation festival on the planet. The international festival run yielded great reviews and we also received a lot of quirky fan art, which is my favorite part of releasing a film.

Sadly, *Hayop Ka!* barely broke even because no one really knew how to navigate a COVID-crippled market back then. Looking back, we should not have sold to Netflix immediately. We should have waited for our festival run so we could have earned our laurels first to raise our film's valuation. Hindsight is 20/20.



We are silly artists, not savvy business folks, so we continue to make more films despite not having experienced financial success with our efforts. Rocketsheep is also responsible for *Heneral Tuna* (2021) an educational miniseries for children about an alien cat sent to conquer the Earth, but is too cute to be taken seriously so he inadvertently learns Filipino values instead. It was a project spearheaded by the National Commission for Culture and Arts.

Our current feature film project is *Zsazsa Zaturannah*. We began working on this back in 2018. It is the story of a shy gay man who swallows a magical rock that transforms him into a flamboyant female superhero who suddenly has to fight all sorts of crazy threats like a giant angry cock and invading alien fashionistas.



It's a fabulous story that needs to be shared with the world, because even if superheroes dominate the box office, there is still a lack of LGBTQ characters on screen. *Zsazsa Zaturannah* was first released as Komiks back in 2002 by the creator Carlo Vergara. It was then adapted into a musical in 2008 and a live action film in that same year. *Zsazsa Zaturannah* is an enduring IP with the graphic novel readily available in bookstores while the musical is constantly re-staged with the most recent run being in Ateneo last year.

Animation is a great medium for the character's crazy shenanigans but producing it is easier said than done.

The Philippines is home to thousands of incredibly talented animators. Many of the shows we watch from Disney, Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network were animated right here. We are well known around the world



is a great place for outsourcing labor, but we are not known for producing our own work.

In the 100 years of Philippine Cinema, we have only had a dozen animated feature films.

Notable examples are the severely underrated *RPG Metanoia* and last year's Philippine entry to the Oscars, *Iti Mapukpukaw*.

If you are wondering why we have produced so little despite having a wealth of talent, the answer is very simple: animation makes no sense to most Filipino producers. It is expensive and takes a long time to make. Even Disney needs five years to complete an animated film despite having vaults of cash and an army of workers.

Meanwhile, a live action film can be made in five months. It does not help that there has never been a local animated film that has been successful at the box office, so it is understandable that most local producers do not want to be involved. The odds for success are simply not good.

For *Zsazsa Zaturrnah*, we partnered with the French production company, Ghosts City. In 2020, we won development grants from the project

markets of Locarno Open Doors Switzerland and BIFAN South Korea. We then got signed by the British sales company, SC Films.

In 2021, we were lucky to get the support of the International Co-Production Fund (ICOF) that the Philippines' Film Development Council rolled out. The future looked good for our film as long as we could raise the rest of the money to finish it.

Raising funds proved very challenging. From Brussels to Venice, we participated in project markets all over Europe but the common feedback was that the queerness of *Zsazsa Zaturrnah* made it too niche for the mainstream, but it was also too wacky for the Art House.

In Asia, we learned that China and Islamic countries do not even show LGBTQ films. It's a good thing that we were eventually backed by fellow Filipino indie studios, Nathan and Creazion who both have a track record of making bold projects. We also launched a Kickstarter to raise additional funds. Backers could become cartoon extras in the film. They could be one of the screaming folks running away from a rampaging monster or be a part of the zombie horde.

Rocketsheep remains the largest investor in our own film. We use the money we make from advertising projects to make sure all our employees are paid on time.

We also sell our internal organs. We know it's not a proper business model but it is how we have survived so far.

We hope more local animation studios take risks like we do so we can all figure out how to make original animation production a sustainable endeavor. We dream that Filipino animators can someday be known not just as service providers, but creators as well.

For now we will continue working as long as we have zero debt and we eat at least two meals a day. We love what we do and we hope you watch our films.



Avid Liongoren

is a director & producer for *Rocketsheep*, an indie animation studio





IN WITH THE OLD, SAVING THE CLASSICS

LEO P. KATIGBAK
ABS-CBN FILM RESTORATION GROUP

The idea of film preservation and film restoration are fairly recent considerations in the mainstream. For the longest time, they felt like nebulous concepts limited to the academe and the scholarly.

But the advances in technology and expectations of better quality in the burgeoning multi-channel universe of barely two decades ago opened the doors to the viability of older content.

Sure, there were now more avenues for content creators but while supply seemed endless, satisfying an increasingly more discriminating audience proved to be a challenge and those that were thought to be classics could definitely perform better with a bit of gloss and facelift.



Up until the early 2000s, film restoration was limited to analog and it worked when there were decent multiple resources accessible to recreate a film that may have been damaged in parts. It was an expensive process and had its limitations. I remember we had intended to restore *Oro Plata Mata* in the late 1990s and even then, the cost was a prohibitive P25M which would not even address the problems that were fixed subsequently during its digital restoration in 2012. And we had multiple prints of *Oro* to work with. For most movies, you have the one and only surviving print at your disposal.

More platforms, advances in digital technology and a seemingly insatiable desire for content were just the ingredients needed to make producers reconsider the value of their catalogues, but only if they spent a bit more to spruce the titles up so to speak.

The art of film restoration will always be a challenge for anyone endeavoring to tackle it. Aside from being expensive, it is a race against time which has been unkind to older titles. The activity requires patience as it is a process that can't be rushed. But more significantly, it can be resource intensive which already limits the pool of organizations or individuals that can take on the initiative.

We have been lucky in ABS-CBN that then-Chairman Gabby Lopez and then-President Charo Santos-Concio foresaw the need and potential that restoring films produced in-house, or acquired elsewhere, offered given the multitude of platforms the company operated globally.

It still took more than two years and countless image tests with Central Digital Lab before approvals would be given. The initiative, while necessary for the future, was pricey and had to be approached cautiously.

When ABS-CBN Film Restoration started, research was a key factor, and together with our masterplan, consulted with experts in the field from facilities like Technicolor and Deluxe to the Archivists and restoration specialists at the Hollywood Studios. The reaction then was surprise as what ABS-CBN had planned to do was even more ambitious than their current activities. It was going to be hard to bench-mark when we were setting the bar moving forward.

Most comments locally expected us to give up after *Himala*, *Oro Plata Mata*, *Ganito Kami Noon* and a handful of titles. We were writer and director focused so our initial choices of films revolved around delivering a cross-section of work from the aforementioned creatives before delving deeper in their filmographies. We were also limited by what was immediately available, material-wise, so that affected our output.

CHERIE GIL SANDY ANEXOLONG LIZA LORENA FIDES CUYUGAN-ASENSIO
MANNY OJEDA MAYA VALDEZ LORELI VILLANUEVA RONNIE LAZARO ABIO DE LA CRUZ
AND JOEL TORRE

A FILM BY PEQUE GALLAGA

ORO PLATA MATA

DIGITALLY RESTORED AND RE-MASTERED

WRITTEN BY JOSE JAVIER REYES



central digital lab



Happily we chugged along with the advocacy winning fans and the initiative garnering more supporters from young and old alike as more people seemed to enjoy the films of yesteryear, some out of nostalgia, others from curiosity. At least they were interested.

A decade in and some 200 films later, the team had to pivot against political headwinds that nearly shut us down but which subsequently afforded ABS-CBN Film Restoration the rationale to refocus on older titles—the surviving LVN films—which would complement the SAGIP PELIKULA advocacy to a greater degree.

Of the thousands of films produced from the 1920s to the 1960s, barely a fourth survive in multiple formats. Only 5 complete films are known to exist pre-World War 2, with *Ibong Adarna* and *Giliw Ko* already saved under the banner of SAGIP PELIKULA. For a company as illustrious as LVN with more than 300 titles through its 4 decades span, only a little over a hundred survive in video formats with just 10% still with complete prints and possibly restorable. So far, ABS-CBN has already worked on 12 titles. We currently have *Nukso ng Nukso*, a 1960 comedy with Pugo, Bentot, Sylvia La Torre, Diomedes Maturan and Rosa Aguirre nearly completed. The 1948 film *Pista sa Nayon* with Jose Padilla and Rebecca Gonzales are up next, likely 2nd quarter of 2025.

There is an upside, however, as we focused our attention on the often-ignored older titles like *Giliw Ko* from 1939, *Sumpaang* from 1948, *Mutya ng Pasig* from 1950, *Biyaya ng Lupa* from 1958 or *Sandata at Pangako* from 1960. The age and rarity of the films gave the SAGIP PELIKULA advocacy even more gravitas and sparked more conversations on the importance of the older films.

Back in 2015, we had rebranded ABS-CBN Film Restoration as ABS-CBN SAGIP PELIKULA with the support of industry heavyweights, from Joey Reyes to Laurice Guillen to Carlos Siguion-Reyna to Mel Chionglo to Romy Vitug to Raquel Villavicencio to Ricky Lee as well as stars and directors like Piolo Pascual, Nora Aunor, Angel Aquino, Noni Buencamino, Jaime Fabregas, Shaina Magdayao, Ricky Davao, Tonette Jadaone, Mae Cruz, Dan Villegas, Iza Calzado, Maja Salvador, Cherry Pie Picache and countless more. Now even with more older classics on hand, we had a more potent showcase to promote the importance of preserving our cinematic legacy.

These restored/enhanced titles from a bygone era have once more given us a look at our history with movie images providing documentation of our history, social mores of the period, fashion, architecture, cultural references, socio-political mindset and many more bits of information that would otherwise be lost or muddled by hearsay interpretation.



It also showcased the early beginnings of Philippine cinema, its evolution and to some extent deterioration due to social, religious and political pressures on the people who created these movies. At the same time, it was proof that even then, we had the means to compete with Hollywood in terms of talent and technology.

For example, the 1941 film *Ibong Adarna* used matte plates and painted back-grounds being used then by the big fantasy films of MGM to considerable impact. Many of the older films used live-sound both on location and sound-stages, combined projected images with actors in the foreground and many other technological advancements of the time.

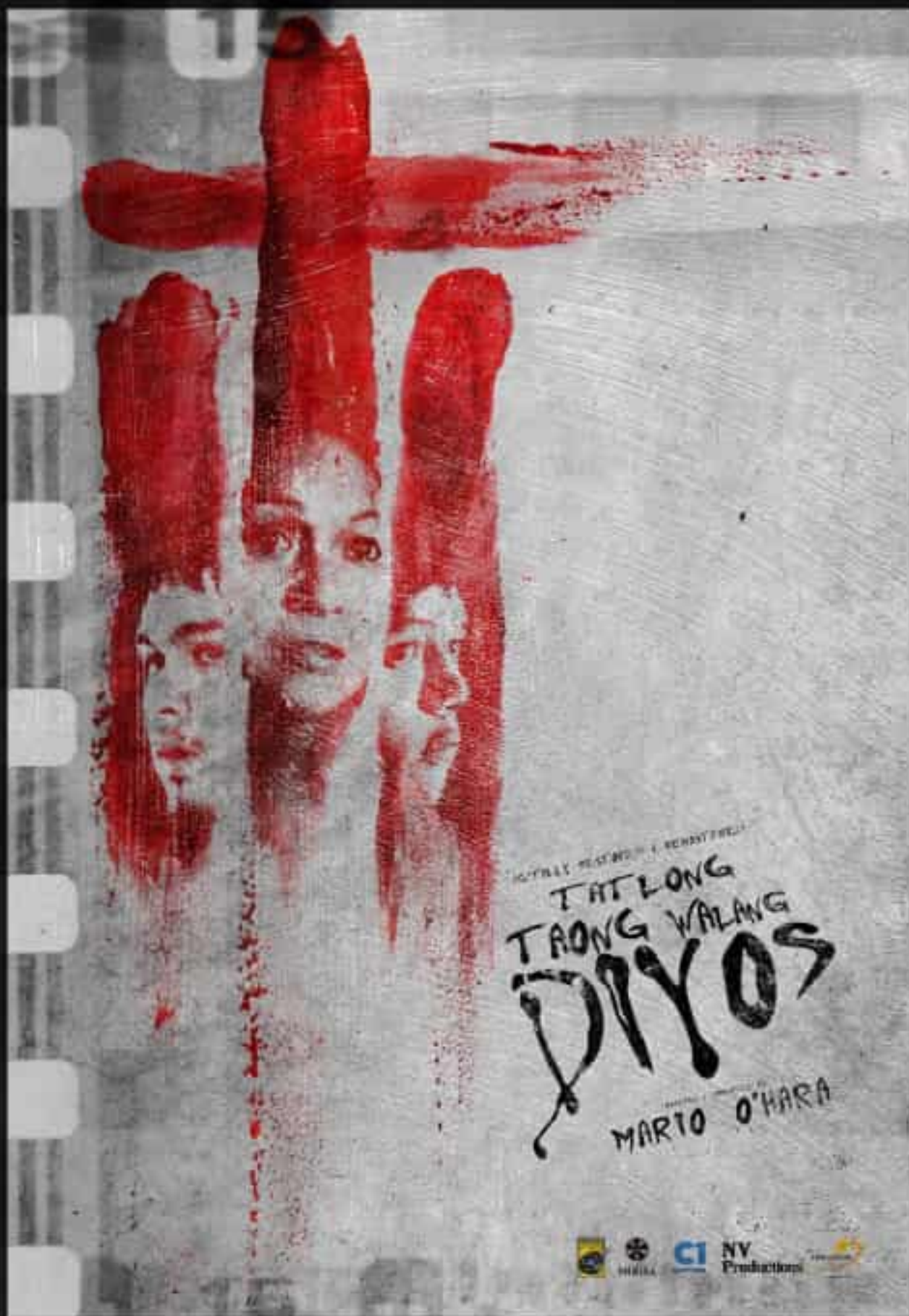
The restored films and their attendant histories also displayed the caliber of our actors, writers and directors that could compete in an international arena. LYN's Manuel de Leon focused on award-winning productions in contrast to Dona Sisang's more commercial predilections. The 1957 film *Badjao* directed by National Artist for Film Lamberto Avellana garnered Asian recognition as did many other titles. Even before Lav Diaz and Brillante Mendoza. Even before Brocka, Bernal, De Leon. Filipino films were already in contention among the world's finest.

I've often had conversations with industry colleagues, many teaching in uni-versities, about their frustrations promoting local films in their class discourse. Only more recent movies had decent copies but older ones, don't even bother.

That sentiment was something we took to heart and included it as part of our rationale for SAGIP PELIKULA. If we could provide a more palatable copy that may not be as crisp as that of the west but won't be as migraine inducing as what most have come to expect of local films with the popcorn audio, scratches, folds and molds, then we had a decent shot at getting young audiences to appreciate the movies of before.

We were also quite pragmatic that given shifting generational tastes, the old isn't really for everybody. But if even 3 out of 10 find the classics interesting, we would have done a more important job of ensuring that the memory of those that came before will forever be remembered. Sometimes you get to do a bit better with the recent enhancement of the original *Shake Rattle and Roll*, celebrating its 40th year, topped the recent MMFF50 exhibition, earning a new generation of fans.

The last four years has actually been very difficult for ABS-CBN Film Restoration. We lost two-thirds of our manpower, much of our budget, depleted our output



going from 25-30 films a year to barely 3-5, all done in-house. With our meager resources we focused on the advocacy using previously restored materials to supplement the handful we can do, partnered with like-minded organizations as well as the academe to get the advocacy across. Interestingly, many branches of government, from the FDCP to agencies to embassies are among our strongest advocates despite everything.

The challenges have also allowed us to explore revisiting other titles for a new coat so to speak. This November, we plan to unveil a black and white version of the Mario O'Hara classic *Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos*. The original had color problems that could no longer be fixed so we experimented and found the new version was even more powerful. We will see how it plays out but hopefully it grows the audience and makes more future experimentation viable.

I think the greatest sin we can commit when it comes to our cinematic legacy is allowing people to forget the past, the greats and the greatness that was achieved then which ideally should be guiding us into the future. It would really be tragic if the few old films that remain will be lost, fading like a distant memory and soon committed to the dust bins of history.

That is why it is heartening that in recent months, the appreciation for the older films have grown steadily, maybe not yet to the level that they are commercially competitive with newer content — that may not even happen. But people now are aware and are more actively advocating the preservation of the past.

It used to be that ABS-CBN was only one of a handful of local groups working on preserving our films. Now, there are more people invested in the effort with both young and old audiences narrowing the generational divide that has made our society generally somewhat dismissive of anything old. We may not be restoring the most number of titles these days but there are certainly more of us restoring titles now.

As we make way for a new era and generation of Archivists and Cinema aficionados, we hope to leave behind a collection of films which, while not catching the full spectrum of our cinema legacy, will offer a gateway that they can explore and, hopefully, expand as new avenues, surviving copies and technologies become available.

That is a legacy we can all be proud of.



Leo Katigbak

began his career as a freelance writer, editor, producer and director for television in the mid-1980s. He established the ABS Film Archive in 1984 and later took on roles in content acquisition and programming for the broadcast channels of ABS and Studio 23. He was chief of staff in the president's office when he launched ABS-CBN Film Restoration. Now a consultant, he oversees the defense of Sagip Pelikula and the restoration efforts of ABS-CBN.

THE ARTIST'S PICKS

JUSTIN BESANA'S TOP 10 POSTERS THAT HE DESIGNED HIMSELF

GAY ACE DOMINGO

In 2024, Filipino artist Justin Besana marked his 14th year as a designer of film posters. It was in 2011 when he, a fresh Fine Arts Major in Advertising graduate, got a message from his college colleague Jayson Sarmienta. "He asked if I would like to try to create a study for a movie poster," Justin said of Jayson. Justin was skeptical but he eventually gave it a try. The project was the Vice Ganda starrer *The Unkaboggable Praybeyt Benjamin*, a comedy about a gay man (Vice) who pretends to be straight so that he could enlist in the army and save his grandfather who was captured by terrorists. For this, Justin had the protagonist crawling through the tall grass, wearing a camouflage uniform and a helmet with grass, twigs and flowers. "The management of Star Cinema really loved my design so they decided to use it as an alternate poster. They required an all-star for the main poster and what I created was a just a solo Vice Ganda poster."

Praybeyt Benjamin opened the door for Justin to design more film posters or key art images. Next were the rom-com *Unofficially Yours* which had stars John Lloyd Cruz and Angel Locsin naked except for a sheet of newspaper spread with the front page headline "Do relationships need an official status?", and the horror-drama *Corazon, Ang Unang Aswang* that had Erich Gonzalez and Derek Ramsay enclosed in what looked like a nest, holding each other's hands; Derek looking at Erich but Erich sinisterly averting Derek's gaze.

Designing posters for Filipino motion pictures is demanding. Pinoys are very star-oriented so producers want most of, if not all, the photos of the major cast on the poster. Those who approve of the design rarely consider subtlety, storytelling and artistry. Justin Besana changed the game. Through the years, his works have proven that this format can be creative and visually stunning without sacrificing the main purpose — which is to sell the film.

Like a painter who faces a blank canvas or a sculptor studying an unpolished slab, every film assignment still feels daunting for Justin. He said, "Each movie poses a different challenge for key art designers like me since we must show the audience the uniqueness of the film or series, and the reasons they must see it." For him the most difficult are those that require illustrations. "These give me an additional layer of difficulty because illustration is not my forte. But, as they say, a healthy amount of challenge keeps the fire burning."

Clients who understand and share Justin's vision are rewarded with designs or images that haunt the beholder long after the poster reveal.

Justin's talent has reached beyond the Philippines. Work for ABS-CBN and other Filipino entertainment companies keep him busy. Now, film-makers from abroad also commission him. Foreign press, such as UK's Sight and Sound, and art institutions like Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (National Museums in Berlin), have featured Justin.

As Justin enters his 15th year as a film key art designer, we asked him to look back and choose ten of his most favorite posters that he designed. He picked 13 and explained the reasons for his choices.

1 PRAYBEYT BENJAMIN (2011), UNOFFICIALLY YOURS (2012), CORAZON: ANG UNANG ASWANG (2012)

Someone from Star Cinema said to me that it comes in threes and these three titles are my stepping stone to the world of film and television. These are my sentimental favorites because without them, I wouldn't be the key art designer I am now.



2 WHETHER THE WEATHER IS FINE (2021)

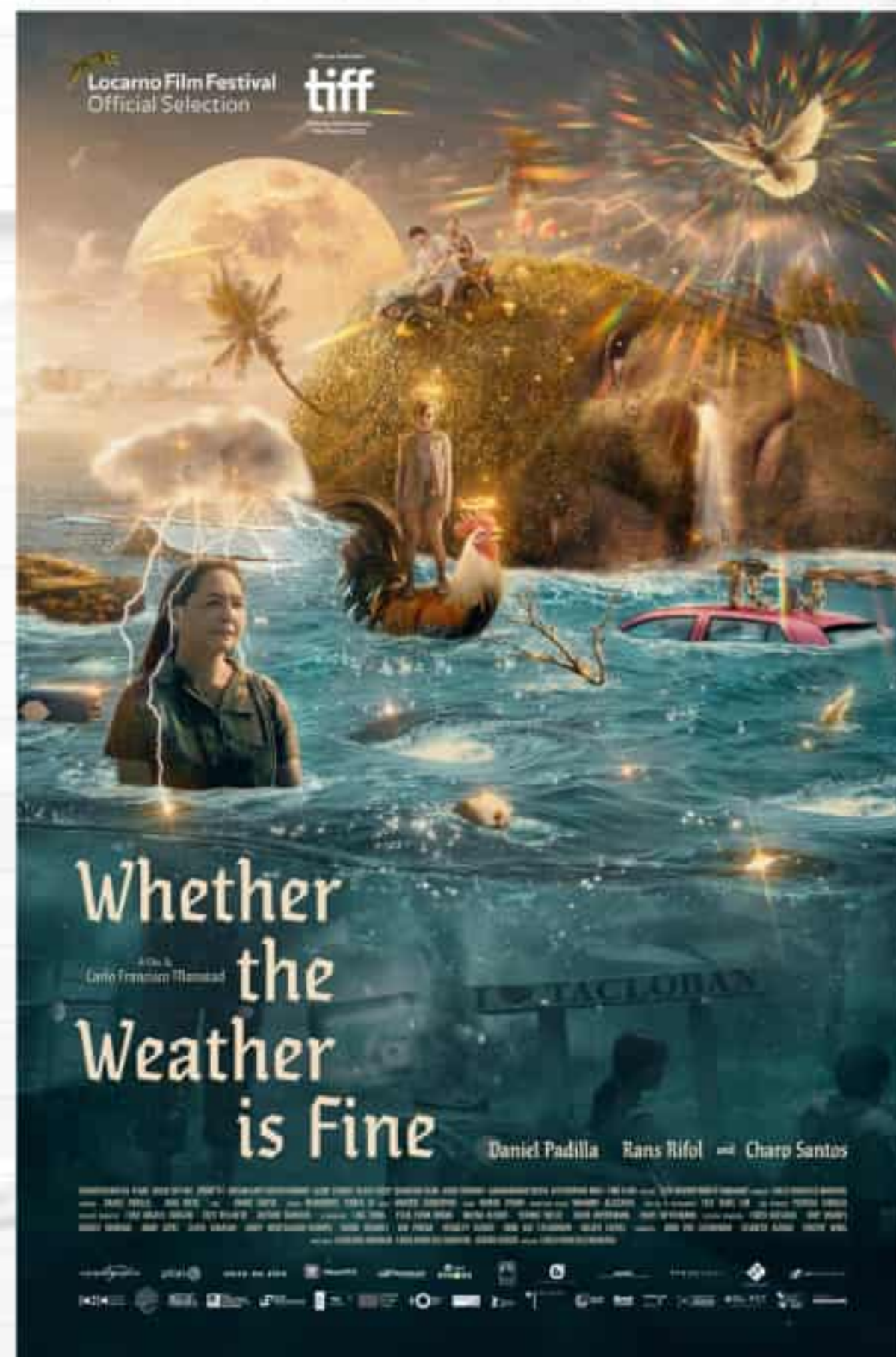
It was one of my hardest projects, and because every little detail had to be examined and had to be relevant – the process was tedious but worth all the effort. I was happy embarking on the journey of designing this because this is basically my style as a surreal artist. Last year (2023), it was included in the "Big Screen Film Posters of All Time" in Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

3 THE BROKEN MARRIAGE VOW (2022)

In terms of series marketing, this surprised us and proved a lot of things. There were publications and articles about it, and it generated a lot of buzz online. It proved how effective important key artworks are at marketing content.

4 RESTORED KAKABAKABA KA BA? (2015)

Although I have designed a lot of restored film key art, this initial poster for "KAKABAKABA KA BA?" is my particular favorite and stands out in my opinion since it was too avant-garde from my usual and it's experimental. It encouraged me to use only typography to tell the story effectively.



5 DIRTY LINEN (2023)

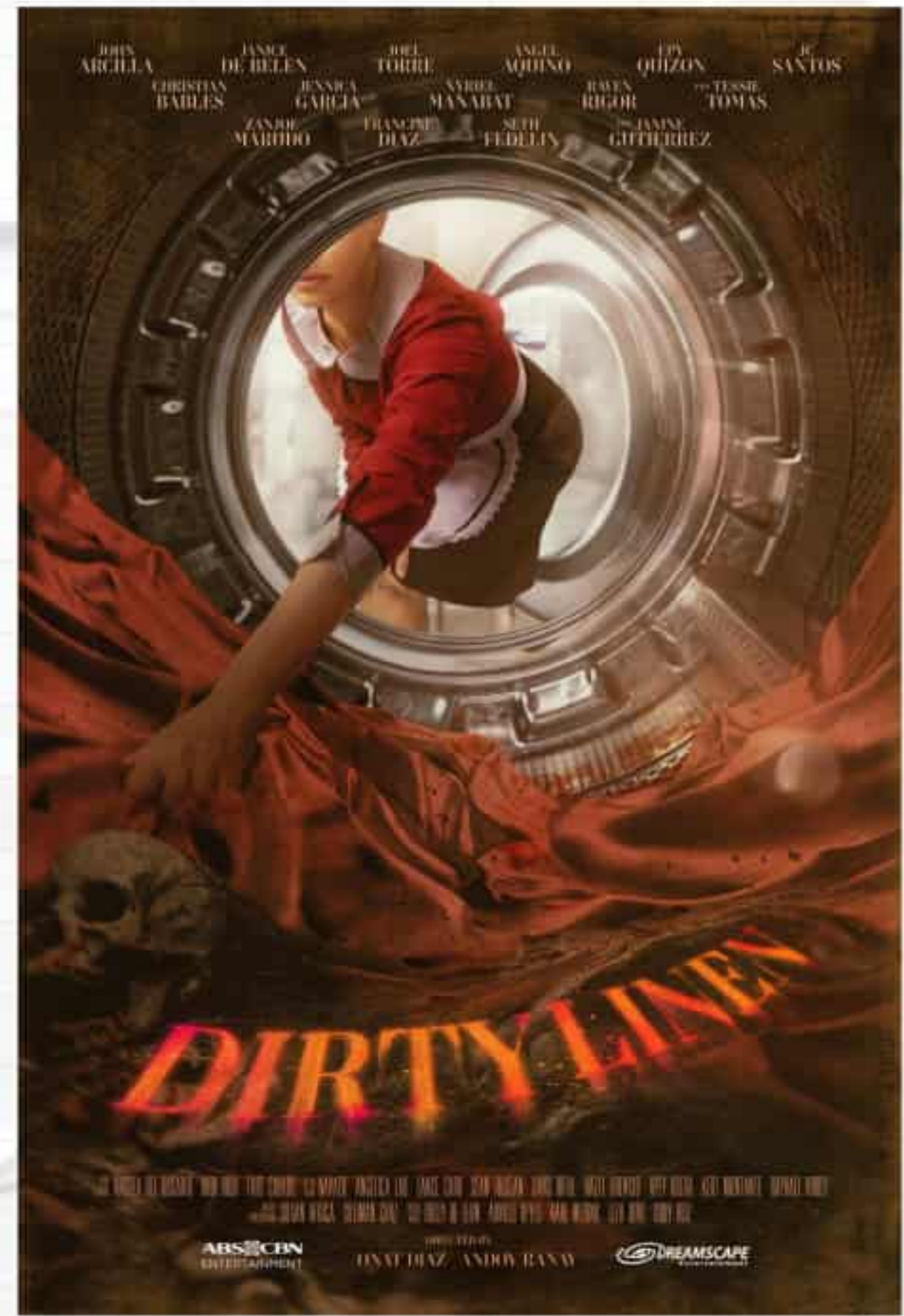
I believe this is the first television series we've released in recent years without any faces. We relied solely on storytelling, and it worked out well

6 DARNA (2022)

It was years in the making and I was really preparing for this. A lot had happened and when it finally pushed through, my father died. I channeled my grief and made something meaningful and dedicated this poster to my father. Even though this was emotionally taxing, we managed to fly through it all.

7 SUNSHINE (2024)

I've already made a number of ribbon art pieces similar to Kakabakaba Ka Ba?. However, I believe that this is the result of years of experimenting with this method.



8 Triangle of Sadness (PH release 2022)

When I was given the opportunity to design both Ms. Dolly de Leon's solo poster and the Triangle of Sadness PH poster, I felt goose bumps. Being a part of an international movie that has our own actor was just a dream and it finally happened. Neon Rated, the distribution company of TOS, even requested our permission to use our poster for their limited edition Blu-ray release.



9 LEONOR WILL NEVER DIE (2022)

This is my second Filipino film selected for the Sundance Film Festival. I had a great time working on this since director Martika let me be creative, playful, and fully explore Leonor's persona. I was interviewed and featured by the British Film Institute's SIGHT AND SOUND Magazine during its UK premiere; it was an unforgettable experience.





A FILM BY BRYERLY LONG AND TATIANA BLACKINGTON JAMES
 BRYERLY LONG & TATIANA BLACKINGTON JAMES PRESENT "HOMOLOGIES" A FILM BY ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ TAM DE NOVALES JULIA FOZZI
 TIMOTHY CONDUKES MARTA RUDDO ALSO STARRING VIOLETA MADAL SPECIAL THANKS TO JUDE LANGSTON (CUBO RUBEN PUEBLA) & ALEXANDER RYDELL
 MUSIC BY TIM SEYMOUR DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY PWC IN PARTIALITY BY TATIANA BLACKINGTON JAMES DIRECTOR OF CASTING BRYERLY LONG

10 Homologies (alternative poster, 2023)

Although I have produced a number of foreign film key art, this is my particular favorite because it was a lot of fun. Although my American producer and director did not particularly appreciate the design, it still inspires me to be innovative. I want to pursue surreal art, but I do understand and I am well aware that not all films are the same. It's just a personal pick for my soul.

As the talented young artist is on the road to his 1000th movie poster design, he wants to expand his wings and experiment with his art further. "I'm looking forward to working with a wider range of local and international filmmakers. What's really special about this is that learning from filmmakers from around the world, it helps me develop and improve my visual storytelling; it opens up my imagination. I get to absorb a wealth of knowledge from individuals with diverse backgrounds and I gain a deeper understanding of the visual language for different audiences," said Justin.

Mounting an exhibit, designing a poster for a Korean drama or film, or for A24, or Neon, or a Hollywood outfit, these are part of his wish list. Wherever his art takes him, Justin will always be proud to be Filipino. "Sticking to my roots while expanding my horizon is really my goal."



Gay Ace Domingo

is in charge of Marketing & PR at San Anselmo Publications, Inc.

Tralala Kingdom

Doon po sa amin, kingdom ng Tralala
Maraming hiwaga ay walang adarna;
May mga prinsipe, hari, at prinsesa,
May mga pulubi, payaso, at donya;
Banyaga ang ngalang Rogelio't Amalia
At Max Eddie't Salva pati kontrabida.

Ang mga payasong kasama ni Dolphy
Ay Pugo, Cachapoy, Chichay, at gurami,
Pampatawa sila sa bayang pulubi;
At pagtawa'y gamot sa buhay na api,
Dahil po ang letson para lang sa konde
At obispong laging may alak at karne.

Bawal sa Tralala'ng rebelde't himala
Dahil lumalason sa isip ng madla;
Bawal ang rebeldeng may diwang sarliwa
Dahil parang gulay madaling masira;
Bawal ang himala dahil nakahidwa
Ng raket sa lumang bendita't kandila.

Bawal din ang droga, pero ang nabisto
Reyna ang kapural sa damo at shabu;
Bawal din ang puta pero ereder
Nadakil sa kasa ng bomba at porno,
Natutop ang Hari at tatlong kerido,
Kayâ pinalayas sila sa palasyo.

Nauso ang Brocka, Marilou, at Bernal
Pagsilip sa dumi ng lungsod na banal;
Nag-aaway-away: pamaypay-superstar,
Pila sa takilya ng kanta't sayawan;
Nauso'ng artistang meyor at kongresman
May Erap umistar hanggang Malacañang.

Ang Tralala Kingdom ay lalong nagutom
Habang tumatabâ ang ilang poon;
May sindikato na pati police major,
Niraket ang covid, famas, philhealth, pagcor,
Ang POGO, ang riles... daming alimuom,
At may nagmarites — magrerebolusyon!

Ano ang nangyari? Nang magkaeleks'yon,
'Binalik ang Hari ng 21 milyon,
Daming pista't peste sa Tralala ngayon!
Madrama sa TV ang imbestigasyon!

At SONA ng Hari, "Mahal kong Tralala:
Lagi nang magpista, aliwin ang masa,
At anumang peste'y maiinda nila,
Maski nawawalâ'ng tinapay sa mesa,
Basta't may tawanan walang mag-aalsa."
Tara na, Tralala, tara na, Tra... lala...

20 Setyembre 2024

RIO ALMA

Si Direk

"Sus, Santa Barranca!" Yan ang sambitlaing paborito niya;
Sa electrifying, daig pa ang bomba sa Plaza Miranda.
At k'widaw, pag ikaw ang nadeskartehan o napasadhan,
Para kang pinapak ng putakti't pukyt na nagkawan-kawan.
"Magpasens'ya ka na," ang bulong ng iba, "at moody si Direk."
"Genius kasi..." "At temperamental!" "At napaka-perfectionist!"
Talagang 'Ika nga'y magkahalong poot at todong pagsamba
Sa mga produksiyon ang tingin ke Direk ng mga kasama.
Kung minsan ay anghel. Kung minsa'y demonyo. Depende sa torno.
Kung bakit talagang matalino naman basta't sa teatro,
Napa-feature pa raw sa magasing Kanô bilang "man of talents."
(Ewan kung iyon din ang pinag-usbungan ng tangos ng puwet.)
Kayâ sa sanay na, anuman ang andar at pasiklab niya
Di na pinapansin. Utot n'ya, bahô n'ya," pilosopya nila.
Ang siste lang nitô, sa bulong-bulungang masama't mabuti,
Lalong naging legend ang bagyo sa ulo't b'yada ng kukote.

Binatang-binata. Sabi'y di masilô at lubhang mallap.
(Pero sa astang 'to, milagro ngang merong magtangkang mangarap.)
Kung titingnan mo lang, di ka mai-impress at sa biglang tingin
Di mo iisiping ito'y isang tao na me mararating;
Nguso'y nakatikwas, animo'y kabayong laging nakaingos,
Tenga'y nangagtinghas, para bang eliseng handang bumulusok,
Ang mata'y tila ba pabural-bural kundi nasasangga
Ang sayoteng ilong at lagpas tres s'yentos niyang antipara.
Katawan? 'Ika nga'y dibdib-ketepone at di maikubli
Ng barong maluwang ang parilyang p'wedeng ihawan ng turkey.
Maliban sa lakad na laging pasagsag — ay masasabi mo
(Kahit kasalanan itong pintasero sa tao't kabayo)
Ito pong si Direk, saanman sipatin, anuman ang galing,
Ay p'wedeng kadobol ng new Rocinanteng me baro't salamin.



Virgilio S. Almario

Pambansang Manlilikha sa
Panitikan

Laging pasan niya'y fatigue na shoulder bag na napakalapot
Ang mantsa ng gámit, at sabi'y rekwerdo ng two years sa New York.
Pero parang ito ang kaniyang bodega ng eccentricities.
Kapagka um-Ingles, kumtodo "Ah" at "Well" with his East Coast accent.
At halos bumuga pati laway sa parihabâ n'yang bibig
Sa pag-aaspire ng kaniyang consonants. Siyempre, ang bisig
Painda-indayog, lalo't nag-istres ng isang brilliant point.
Sumasalipadpad pati mga siko, at kung pumirikot,

Sino ba si Bruce Lee at ang mga master ng kung-fu at judo?
At kung sumasaltik ang mga daliri — para dramatiko —
Na laging me ipit na isang Chesterfield, lumâ si Buruka
And her magic tungkod: Sa bawat pagkompas, kung kursunada ka
Ay mamadyikin ka para maging isang Brando o si Presley
At kung kaaway ka, para kang gagawing maupôs na ashtray.
Dapat ding mapansin ang pilig ng ulo (Hindi ito charot,
Ito'y sinasadya kahit na magmukhang turumpong kangkarot).
Sapagkat sa bawat pagkiling, pagsuling, pagtango't pag-iling
Ay sumasamburga ang kaniyang malago't buhok na maitim,
Ala-Dylan Thomas, medyo tander rocker, o kayâ mestisong
Isang angry young man sa kanlu-kanluran nating entablado.

Kapag ininterbyu: De-rapidong bukadura'y spirited
Magtadtad-magbusa, ika nga, from the Greeks to werswers,
Ultimong set design ng primerong Hamlet. At pag sa local scene,
Ang talas ng dila'y 'alang pakundangan sinumang litisin
Na colleague at kullig: "Si Brochas ay bakla!" "Si Guirote'y pseudo!"
Si Borna! ay bakya! "Marilao? Tsamba lang! "Si Orlando Tonyo?
Ke Klase? Ang bagay sa kaniya'y magtinda ng tela't magsastre!
Si Bellasna? Nakul Puro tourist postcards ang naidirehel!
Well, just wait till I get into movies... " Etsetera, eteap'wera.
Dalahirang labi maski na tahiin parang di masarâ.
Siguro ang tigil sa pagsirit nitô'y pagdating ng hamog:
Tiwarik sa kâma si Direk, kung bagâ sa sandok, nahulog
Sa gintong palayok ng mga pangarap. Subalit patúloy
Ang giling ng utak, maski pasandrit ang palyadong ilong;
Guniguni'y direktor siyâ ng modern Prinsipe Rodante
At umaasiste sina Kurosawa, Bergman, at-Fellini.

20 Enero 1970, Rev 21 Setyembre 2024

PAANO NGA BA MAGBASA NG PELIKULA? APAT NA DULOG SA PAGSUSURI NG PELIKULANG FILIPINO

NICANOR G.
TIONGSON

INTRODUKSIYON

Hindi mapasusubaliang isa sa pinakapopular na sining sa Filipinas ang pelikula. Mula nang unang magpalabas ng pelikulang pipi noong 1897 hanggang sa magsalita ang pelikula noong 1933 hanggang sa magkaroon ng kulay ang pelikula noong dekada '50 hanggang sa maimbento ang *digital video technology* noong 1999, kinagiliwan na ito ng mga manonood mula sa iba't ibang saray ng lipunan. Dahil sa popularidad nito, nagkaroon ito ng kapangyarihan na humubog ng kaisipan at panlasa ng mga manonood. Kaya naman ginamit na rin ng mga komersiyal na prodyuser ang mga pelikulang genre di lamang para kumita kundi para itaguyod ang pananaw at interes ng establisimyento. Sa kabilang banda, sa labas ng industriya, naipahayag ng alternatibong pelikula o indie film sa isang masining na paraan ang katunggaling pananaw at interes ng nakararaming hubad sa poder at yaman.

Kung ganito na kalaki ang kapangyarihan ng pelikula na magpalaganap ng mga ideyang makabubuti o makasasama sa taumbayan, marapat lamang na turuan ang manonood na huwag magpabalag sa aliw na dulot ng puting-tabing, kundi manapa'y matutong basahin ang mas malalim na kahulugan ng pelikula at tukuyin ang mga mensaheng isinisingit o ipinupuslit o iginiglit nito, habang inaaliw ang tila nagayumang manonood. Para masuri ang pelikula sa isang masusing paraan, iminumungkahi naming gamitin ang sumusunod na apat na dulong: 1) ang pagsusuri sa pelikula bilang likhang-sining; 2) ang pagtukoy sa mga konteksto sa paggawa ng pelikula; 3) ang pag-unawa sa naging dating ng pelikula sa mga manonood; at 4) ang pagtimbang sa sinasabi ng pelikula sa pananaw ng Kamalayang Pilipino na maka-TAO.

UNANG DULOG:

Ang Pagsusuri ng Pelikula Bilang Likhang-Sining

SA DULOG NA ITO, ang tanong na kailangang sagutin ay ito: Ano ang temang/mga temang ibig ipahayag ng pelikula at paano niya ito ipinapahayag gamit ang mga elemento ng pelikula at sa estilong pinili ng pelikula?

Mahalagang tukuyin sa simula pa lamang ang estilo ng pelikula, pagkat ang lahat ng elemento ng pelikula ay nagbabago batay sa piniling estilo. Dalawa ang pangunahing estilong madalas gamitin sa loob at labas ng industriya ng pelikula sa Filipinas: a) ang estilo ng mga pelikulang genre, tulad ng drama, aksiyon, komedi, horror, fantasy, bomba, at iba pa, na ang pangunahing layunin ay maglahad ng istorya para maaliw ang manonood, at b) ang estilo ng art film, New Cinema, alternatibong pelikula o indie film, na naglalayong ipahayag ang personal na bisyon ng direktor at ang pagkaunawa niya sa pagkatao ng Filipino at mga suliraning kinakaharap niya sa kaniyang lipunan. Ang unang estilo ay nabuo at naitakda batay sa mahabang tradisyon ng komersiyal na pelikula, samantalang ang pangalawa ay karaniwang matutunghayan sa ilang pelikulang ginawa, sa loob man o labas ng industriya, na orihinal, masining, at may integridad.

Sa pelikula, komersiyal man o alternatibo, ang pangunahing awtor o tagapamahala ay ang direktor. Alam man niya o hindi, siya ang pinanggagalingan ng interpretasyon ng

isinasalaysay ng pelikula. Para mai-parating niya ang kaniyang bisyon para sa pelikula, kailangang pagsanibin niya ang iba-ibang elemento ng pelikula sa isang malinaw at/o malikhaing paraan. Kabilang sa mga elementong ito ang iskrip, ang pagganap ng mga aktor, ang disenyong pamproduksiyon, ang potograpiya o sinematograpiya, ang editing, at ang paglalapat ng tunog at musika.

Ang batayang elemento ng pelikula ay ang iskrip na siyang nagsisilbing balangkas at istruktura ng buong pelikula. Ang iskrip ay may naratibo na siyang nagtataghi-taghi ng mga tauhan at pangyayaring magaganap sa kabuuan ng pelikula — batay sa kung paano nakikita at hinuhubog ng manunulat at direktor ang realidad na kanilang pinapaksa. Sentral sa naratibo ang mga tauhan na may hinahanap, minimithi, o ibig makamit at handang magsakripisyo o makipaglaban sa sinumang humadlang sa kaniya sa pagkakamit niya ng kaniyang layunin. Kaugnay nito, kailangang sagutin ng manunuri ang ilang tanong. Sino ang pangunahing tauhan at ano ang kaniyang ibig makamit? Ano at sino ang kaniyang makakatunggali na magiging balakid sa kaniyang pagtatagumpay? Ano ang kahihinatnan ng ganitong pagtutunggali? Malinaw ba ang istruktura ng *plot* o banghay, mula pagbubukas ng pelikula hanggang sa rurok nito hanggang sa pagwawakas? Malinaw ba ang development ng pangunahing tauhan

mula pagbubukas hanggang pagsasara ng pelikula? Dagdag pa, kailangang tukuyin ang punto de bista na ginagamit ng pelikula pagkat ito ang mata, tinig, at kamalayan na humuhubog at gumagabay sa pagsasalaysay. Ito'y maaaring punto de bista ng pangunahing tauhan o isa sa mga tauhan, o ito ri'y maaaring obhetibong pananaw ng *omniscient filmmaker*.

Bukod sa naratibo, kailangan ding unawain at ipaliwanag ng manunuri kung paanong binibigyang-buhay ang iskrip ng pagganap ng mga aktor, sinematograpiya, disenyong pamproduksiyon, editing, musika, at tunog.

Malaking bahagi ng ikatatagumpay ng isang pelikula ang pagganap ng mga aktor. Ang pagganap na ito ay nag-iiba batay sa estilo ng pelikula. Iba ang kumbensiyon o estilo ng pag-arte (mas palabas, nagpapahiwatig ng bida at kontrabida) sa drama, komedi, horror, aksiyon, fantasy, at iba pang genre. Sa mga pelikulang gumagamit ng estilong realistiko, kailangang pag-aralan ng aktor ang buong pagkatao ng papel/tauhanang kaniyang ginagampanan. Sinasaliksik ng mga seryosong aktor ang bakgrawn, pangarapin, suliranin, pisikal na dating, aktitud, paraan ng pagkilos at pagsasalita, at kabuuang sikolohiya ng ganoong tauhan. Higit sa lahat, kailangang maunawaan niya ang mga motibasyong nagpapakilos sa tauhan at ang relasyon nito sa iba pang katakter ng pelikula. Kung sensitibo ang aktor, mapapaniwala niya ang manonood na totoo ang mga kaisipan at damdaming ipinapahayag niya at mahuhulog ang loob ng manonood sa kaniya.

Ang sinematograpiya ang iba't ibang paraan kung paano ginagamit ang kamera para kumuha ng mga shot, ang posisyon nito na maaaring nakatingala mula sa ibaba o nakadungaw mula sa itaas, ang galaw nito

mula kanan papuntang kaliwa o vice versa (*pan left, pan right*), mula itaas pababa at vice versa (*tilt down o tilt up*), o lumalapit-lumalayo sa aktor (*dolly*) o sumasabay sa kaniya sa kaniyang paggalaw sa eksena (*track*). Mahalagang aspekto ng sinematograpiya ang pag-lilaw – ang lohikal na pinanggalingan nito, ang ibang ilaw na nagpapalabas sa iba-ibang detalye o nagpapahiwatig ng oras o panahon. Pinaplano din ng kamera ang mga kuha na may *foreground, middle ground, background* at iba pang uri ng pagkukuwadro o framing para linawin ang nangyayari sa eksena at isali o dagdagan o alisin o bawasan ang empasis sa mga aktor o detalye ng disenyong pamproduksiyon ayon sa bisyon ng direktor. Isang bagong gamit sa kamerang nauso sa pagdating ng magagaang digital kamera ang estilo ng “meandering camera” kung saan gumagalaw ang kamera (hawak ng kameraman) para higit na maging dinamiko ang aksiyon ng isang eksena.

Ang disenyong pamproduksiyon o *production design* ay ang pagpili at paghahanda sa mga lugar at/o balangkas gagamitin bilang set ng bawat eksena ng pelikula. Maaaring ito'y naroon na at dadagdagan na lamang o itatayo sa loob o labas ng istudyo. Ang set na ito ay nilalagyan din ng tamang kagamitan at dekorasyon o *set props*. Kasama din sa disenyong pamproduksiyon ang mga kostyum at kostyum props, make-up at *coiffure*, at kung minsan prostetiks, na babagay sa panahon ng eksena at karakter ng mga tauhan.

Kapag nakunan na ang magkakahiwalay na mga eksenang bumubuo ng iba't ibang bahagi ng iskrip, magsisimula na ang *post-production phase*. Sa editing, pagdurugtong-dugtungan ang lahat ng mga shot para mabuo ang mga eksena ng pelikula ayon sa pagkakasunod-sunod sa iskrip. Maaring alisin sa editing

ang mga eksenang hindi esensiyal, lumikha ng *suspense*, at iba-ibang *effect* o ritmo sa naratibo ng buong pelikula. Pagkatapos, ilalapat ang mga tunog ng diyalogo na maaaring nirekord na *live* o kaya'y *ida-dub* na lamang, at iba pang tunog o *sound effects* na hinihingi ng mga pangyayari sa eksena (putok ng rebentador, ihip ng hangin, awit na naririnig mula sa malayo) para mapatingkad ang damdamin o mood ng isang eksena (nakatatokot, masaya, malungkot, pormal, mapaglaro) maaaring lapatan ito ng musika. Kung minsan, may temang musika o *theme music* na ginagamit sa kahabaan ng pelikula sa iba't ibang *variation* nito.

Ang Konteksto ng Paggawa ng Pelikula

PANGALAWANG DULOG:

MATAPOS SURIIN ANG katangian ng pelikula bilang likhang-sining, mapalalalim pa ang pagkaunawa rito kung matutukoy kung sino ang gumawa nito, bakit ito ginawa, at para kanino ito ginawa. Gayundin, mahalagang malaman kung ano ang mga kalagayang pansining at pampelikula at kung ano ang mga kondisyon sa ekonomiya, politika, relihiyon, at lipunan, na maaaring nagkaroon ng Impluwensiya sa paggawa ng pelikula.

Kung ano ang prodyuser, ganoon din ang pelikula. Bagaman hindi ito laging totoo (ang

At dapat lamang ulitin, na ang lahat ng nabanggit na elemento — ang iskrip, pagganap ng aktor, sinematograpiya, disenyo ng produksiyon, editing, paglapat ng tunog at musika, at iba pang aspekto ng paggawa ng pelikula — ay nasa kontrol ng direktor. Siya ang lumilikha ng mga eksena (*miseen scene*) at nagtatahi-tahi nito para mabuo ang naratibo ng pelikula at mapalutang niya ang kaniyang bisyon para sa pelikula. Kung matagumpay ang gagawing pagsasanib ng mga elementong ito, magiging likhang-sining ang isang pelikula.

masining na *Sisa*, 1952, ni Gerardo de Leon ay produkto ng isang komersiyal na istudyo), tila ganoon nga ang kalakaran. Mula 1933 nang matatag ang malalaking istudyo hanggang sa pagkatapos ng Ikalawang Digmaang Pandaigdig nang namayagpag ang Big Three mula 1945 hanggang 1960 at pagkatapos nila ang mga independent prodyuser nang sumunod na dalawang dekada, ang iniluwal ng mga prodyuser ay pelikulang genre dahil ito ang kinahiratihan na ng iba't ibang uri ng manonood, kaya tiyak ang kita sa mga ito. Sa ganitong sitwasyon, kinailangang ipaglaban

ng mga direktor na tulad nina Ishmael Bernal at Lino Brocka sa kanilang mga prodyuser ang mga pelikula nilang may seryosong tema at masining ang pagkakagawa.

Pero noon pa mang dekada '70, marami nang direktor na lumikha ng mga pelikulang "alternatibo" (ibig sabih'y iba sa karaniwang komersiyal na pelikula) na magagawa lamang sa labas ng sistemang istudyo. Itinatag ni Manuel Conde ang Manuel Conde Productions para sa mga pelikula niyang umiinog sa mga isyung panlipunan, tulad ng *Juan Tamad Goes to Congress*, 1959, na hindi ipoprodyus ng mga istudyo dahil pinupuna nito ang mga ilegal na gawain ng mga nasa kongreso. (Tiongson 2007) Noong 1977, nilikha ni Kidlat Tahimik ang kaniyang obra maestrang *Mababangong Bangungot* na kinilala sa Berlin Film Festival. Pero dumami na lamang ang mga pelikulang likhang-sining o art film nang dumating ang teknolohiyang digital video (DV) noong 1999. Dahil mas mura na ang teknolohiyang ito at makagagawa na ang filmmaker ng sarili niyang pelikula, nakalaya ang indie film sa tanikala ng komersiyal na prodyuser at namukadkad at kumalat ang malaman at masisining na indie film di lamang sa Kamaynilaan kundi pati sa iba't ibang rehiyon ng Filipinas. Radikal ang naging pagkakaiba sa *mode of production* ng sistemang istudyo patungong pelikulang indie.

Ayon sa dalawang paraan ng produksiyon na nabanggit, mauuri din ang mga direktor sa dalawa: a) iyong mga direktor na tagapamahala lamang ng produksiyong maayos na nagsasalaysay lamang ng kuwento (*metteur-en-scene*) ng komersiyal na genre, at b) ang mga direktor na may bagong insight na ipinapahayag sa ating pagkatao at pagka-Filipino at ginagamit ang mga elemento ng pelikula sa isang malikhaing paraan para ipahayag ang mga kaisipang ito (*auteur*).

Marami sa mga direktor ng mga istudyo, lalo na noong mga unang dekada ng pelikula, ay hindi propesyonal na direktor, kundi natuto ng pagdederehe sa mga nauna sa kanila o dili kaya'y sa panonood ng mga pelikulang Hollywood na bumaha sa bansa, lalo na pagkatapos ng digmaan. Bagaman karamihan sa mga direktor na ito ay karaniwang pang-genre, kabilang din sa kanila ang mga direktor na primera klase na taal at tunay na artista, tulad nina Gerardo de Leon at Lamberto Avellana. Kinailangang gumawa ang dalawang ito ng mga pelikulang komersiyal para kumita ang istudyo na nagsusuweldo sa kanila, pero hindi ito naging sagabal para makagawa sila ng mga pelikulang itinuturing na ngayong mga klasiko ng pelikulang Filipino. Ganito rin ang nangyari kina Bernal at Brocka noong dekada '70 hanggang '90.

Sa sistemang istudyo, ang pumipili ng mga artista ay ang mga prodyuser, batay sa kanilang panlasa at sa inaakala nilang may hatak sa masang manonood. Karamihan dito'y mga mestiso at mestisa, na tinuruan ng pag-arteng gangganito; bilang bida na dapat kaawaan at kagiliwan o kontrabida na dapat kainisan at kamuhian ng manonood. Sa sistemang art film, alternatibong pelikula, at indie film, ang batayan ng pagpili sa artista ay kung bagay ba ito sa istorya at tema ng pelikula at marunong ba itong umarte sa estilong realistiko (*internalized acting*), kaya maraming artistang kamukha at kabalat ng karaniwang Filipino na nahasa sa teatro ang itinampok at nakilala sa mga obrang indie. At di na dapat pagtakhan, magkaiba rin ang estilong alam at gamit ng iba pang artista-teknisyan ng pelikula (sinematograpar, taga-ilaw, editor, tagapamahala ng tunog, kompositor, atbp.) — iyong para sa mga pelikulang genre at iyong para sa estilong indie.

Tulad ng nabanggit na sa itaas, ang pangunahing layunin ng mga istudyo at independent prodyuser (lalo na noong dekada '70 at '80) ay magkamal ng tubo sa kanilang puhunan. Natural ito marahil dahil ang tingin sa pelikula noon pa man ay kalakal at industriya. Bagaman karamihan ng mga independent prodyuser noon ay walang pakundangan na isinakripisyo ang mahahalagang elemento ng pelikula (e.g. iskrip, disenyong pamproduksiyon) para mabawasan ang gastos sa pelikula, may mga prodyuser at istudyong tulad ng Sampaguita, LVN, at Premiere na nagluwal ng mga pelikulang komersiyal man ay tila masinop ang pagkakagawa at pinag-isipan ang direksiyon, disente ang pagganap, at mayroong matatawag na disenyo ng produksiyon. Gayunman, kahit ang mga istudyong ito ay waring laging naghahabol sa gastusin, dahil noon ang buwis ng gobyerno sa mga pelikula ay totoong napakabigat at kailangang kumita ang pelikula ng tatlong ulit ng kaniyang orihinal na puhunan para lamang mabawi ang puhunan. Sa gross na kitang iyon, 30 porsiyento ang napupunta sa buwis, 30 porsiyento sa mga teatrong nagpapalabas ng pelikula, at 40 porsiyento sa prodyuser. Kaya naman nang sunod-sunod na nagwelga ang mga manggagawa ng istudyo para humingi ng umento sa kanilang mga sahod simula noong 1960, isa-isa na ring tumiklop ang malalaking istudyo kaysa malugi nang tuluyan.

Sa kabilang banda, ang nangingibabaw na dahilan sa paglikha ng mga art film, alternatibo o indie filmmaker ay ang pangangailangang ipahayag nila ang kanilang mga opinyon, saloobin, at damdamin tungkol sa mga mamamayan at komunidad ng lipunang Filipino. Dahil ang karamihan sa mga pinapaksa at tema ng mga pelikulang ito ay seryoso, bihira ang mga prodyuser, mulat man o hindi, na mamumuhunan nang malaki

sa ganitong uri ng pelikula. Kaya naman ang direktor na rin ang karaniwang tumatayong prodyuser at distribyutor, at kung minsan, sinematograpar, editor, at pablisist na rin. Kaya naman napakalaking biyaya sa mga indie filmmaker ang mga grant na binibigay ng mga *indie film festivals and competition*, tulad ng Cinemalaya, Cinema One (noon), CineFilipino, Sinag Maynila, Pista ng Pelikulang Pilipino, at iba pang grupong nagbibigay ng tulong. At dahil kulang sa pondo, madalas ay sa mga festival lang napapalabas ang mga indie film dahil walang gagastusin para sa malawakang eksibisyon at distribusyon.

Tungkol naman sa tagapanood ng mga pelikulang ito, ang pinupuntirya ng mga prodyuser na komersiyal ay ang pinakamalawak na publiko, na binubuo ng iba't ibang sektor na may kani-kaniyang panlasa sa pelikula. Para masaklaw ang pinakamalawak na bilang ng publikong ito, sinundan ng mga lokal na prodyuser ang estratehiya ng *niche-marketing* ng Hollywood. Sa iskemang ito, ang mga genre ay pinatutungkol sa tiyak na mga sektor: ang pelikulang aksiyon ay para sa kalalakihang mahilig sa labanan; ang drama ay para sa kababaihan na mahilig sa mga emosyonal na paksain at nasaaliw sa kanilang pagluha sa mga eksaheradong eksena ng mga batang sinasaktan ng madrasta, pag-aasawahang mailgalig atbp.; ang komedi ay para sa buong pamilya kaya patok na patok sa Kapaskohan; ang mga horror at/o fantasy ay maaring pampamilya rin; ang bomba ay para sa kalalakihang mahilig sa seks. Sa ganitong paghahati-hati ayon sa genre, lalo lamang tumitibay, napapanatili, at lumalaganap ang mga *stereotype* ng babae, lalaki, asawang babae at asawang lalaki, magulang at anak, matanda at bata, na nagtataguyod sa patriarkiya at nag-etsapuwera sa babae, LGBTQ+, bata, at matanda.

Samantala, ang mga indie film ay ginagawa ng mga filmmaker para sa mga festival at kompetisyon, mga *cause-oriented* na grupo, at mga apisyonadong nasa hayksul at kolehiyo. Dahil sa kawalan ng distribyutor, bihira ang mga indie film na napapalabas pagkatapos ng festival, sa iba't ibang venue na komersiyal sa Maynila at mga rehiyon. At mapalabas man ay hindi gaanong nakakaakit ng tagapanood na 'sinlaki ng sa mga pelikulang genre, marahil dahil iba ang estetika ng pelikulang indie na hindi palabas kundi paloob. Sa halip na mang-alih ito sa pamamagitan ng katatawanan, pagluha, pagkatakot, at pagkamangha sa mga pantastikong mundo, hinihingi nitong tahimik na manood ang tagapanood at pagnilayan ang mga salaysay at isyu na inilalahad ng pelikula. Hindi sa walang aliw na dulot ang mga pelikulang masining, kundi iba ang aliw na alay nito pagkat nanggagaling sa ligayang bunga ng bagong pagkaunawa sa mga realidad ng lipunan na inilalahad sa isang paraang masining na nakaantig rin ng malalim na damdamin.

Para higit na maunawaan ang konteksto ng isang pelikula, mahalaga ring malaman ang mga balon na pinagsalukan nito ng mga paksa, tema, tauhan, kuwento, at kahit estilo ng produksiyon. Sa kaso ng mga istudyo, madalas na humahango ang kanilang mga pelikula ng mga kuwento at tauhan mula sa mga obra maestra ng panitikang Filipino (e.g., *Florante at Laura*, mga nobela ni Rizal); sa popular na nobela ng Liwayway at ibang magasin (e.g., *Punyal na Ginto*); sa mga kilalang programa sa radyo, tulad ng drama (e.g., *Gulong ng Palad*), paligsahan sa pagkanta (*Tawag ng Tanghalan*) at sitcom (e.g., *Sebya, Mahal Kita*), at sa telebisyon, tulad ng istoryang horror (e.g., *Gabi ng Lagim*) o sitcom (e.g., *John en Marsh*); at higit sa lahat, sa komiks (e.g., *Dyesebel, Darna, Jack and Jill, Kalabog en Bosyo*, at marami pang iba). Mahilig ding gumawa ang mga komersiyal

na prodyuser ng mga pelikula tungkol sa mga nakahihindik na pangyayari (e.g., *The Maggie de la Riva Story at The Vizconde Massacre*). Ano ang *common denominator* ng lahat ng istoryang ito? Kilala at kinagigiliwan sila ng laksang manonood, na malamang ay nakaeenganyo ding manood ng bersiyon sa pelikula ng kanilang paboritong istorya o tauhan. Tiyak na ang kita sa takilya,

Sa kabilang banda, humahango ang mga art film, alternatibong pelikula at indie film ng mga kuwento at tauhan sa mga akdang pampanitikan (e.g., *Ibong Adarna, Ibalon*) o pantearo (e.g., *Sa North Diversion Road*), sa kasaysayan (e.g., *Ang Paglilitis kay Bonifacio*), ngunit higit sa lahat, sa mga tunay na pangyayari, tauhan, at isyu sa lipunan (tingnan sa ibaba). Mahalagang impluwensiya sa estilo ng direksiyon, pagganap, disenyong pamproduksiyon, sinematograpiya, at editing ng art film, alternatibong pelikula, at indie film ang mga art film at kilusang pansining mula sa Europa (Italia, Francia, Sweden, Germany), Amerika (Estados Unidos, Mexico, atbp) at Asya (Japan, India, atbp.).

At di dapat kalimutan ang isa pang balon ng inspirasyon para sa mga pelikula — ang mga kondisyon, tauhan, o pangyayaring may kinalaman sa politika, ekonomiya, relihiyon, at pangkalahatang kultura ng bansa. Maraming mga politiko at opisyal ng gobyerno na may ambisyong politikal ang namuhunan sa mga pelikulang pumapaksa sa kanilang buhay at nagpapatingkad sa kanilang kahanga-hangang katangian, na madalas sa hindi ay eksaherado, pinaganda, hindi totoo, o tsismis na nagpapanggap na *history* (e.g., *Maid in Malacanang*). Pero may mga pelikulang komersiyal at indie na kapani-paniwala ang interpretasyon sa mga tauhan at pangyayaring politikal sapagkat nakabatay sa maingat

na pananaliksik sa mga dokumento ng mga tauhan at pangyayaring ito. May pelikula si Gerardo de Leon tungkol kay Moises Padilla na pinaslang dahil kinalaban niya sa eleksiyon ang bata ng isang mayaman at marahas na *incumbent governor* (*The Moises Padilla Story*). May mga indie film na tungkol sa batas militar ni Marcos (ML), militarisasyon sa Mindanao (*Tu Puig Imatuy*), at drug war at EJK (*Respeto*). May mga pelikula ring komersiyal tungkol sa mga isyung pangkabuhayan tulad ng leganap na kahirapan (*Pasan Ko ang Daigdig*), eksploytasyon ng mga manggagawa (*Kapit sa Patalim: Bayan Ko*), paglaganap ng prostitusyon dahil sa kahirapan (*Live Show*). May mga pelikulang tumatalakay sa kahungkagan ng mga milagro (*Himala*)

at pagkalipol ng mga pamilya dahil sa rido o clan war sa Mindanao na isinusulong ng sistemang patriyarka na bumibiktima sa mga bata at kababaihan (*Women of the Weeping River*). Mahalagang pansinin na ang mga pelikulang may mabibigat na isyung panlipunang tinatalakay tulad ng mga nabanggit ang karaniwang pinupuri ng mga kritiko at manonood na *film literate* at siyang tumatanggap ng matataas na pagkilala sa loob at labas ng Filipinas. Sila rin ang bumubuo ng kanon ng pelikulang Filipino o listahan ng pinakamahuhusay na pelikulang nagawa ng mga artistang Filipino. Dahil, wika nga ng isang kritiko: "The best artists are realists."

ANG PANGATLONG DULOG: Ang Dating ng Pelikula sa Manonood

SA DULOG NA ITO, ang sinusuri ay ang naging dating o epekto ng pelikula sa iba't ibang sektor ng manonood at ang estetikang kinagigiliwan ng manonood. Paano nga ba masusukat ang dating na ito?

Una, kung popularidad ng pelikula ang pag-uusapan, katibayan nito ang *audience count* at ang mismong kinita nito sa takilya, at pati na ang tagal ng pagpalabas nito at dami ng sinehang nagpalabas dito. Ingatan lamang na ang datos na makukuha sa kita sa

takilya ay hindi iyong galing sa mga patalastas ng pelikula na, sabihin pa ba, ay talagang pinalalaki kung minsan ang audience count para himuking manood ang maraming iba pa. Sa kabilang banda, bihirang-bihira ang indie film na nagiging "patok sa takilya" at isa na dito ang *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros* na idinistribut ng isang *marketing agency* ng malaking network at naipasok sa regular na iskrining ng maliliit na sinehan sa malls.

Pangalawa, masusukat din ang epekto ng pelikula, at ang uri ng epekto nito, sa reaksiyon sa midya, partikular, sa mga post sa social media, sa mga *feedback* ng *commentators* at *hosts* sa mga programa sa radyo at telebisyon, sa mga rebyu sa diyaryo at magasin na karamiha'y nasa internet na rin, at sa mga journal na inilalabas ng akademya. Karamihan sa mga feedback sa mga nasabing outlet ay karaniwang maigsi at pahapyaw lamang, at nakatuon sa popular o nakatatagwag-pansin na aspekto ng pelikula (e.g., ang pagganap ng artista o personalidad na popular, *sensational* na paksa, at mainit at kontrobersiyal na isyu). Ang malalim at sistematikong pagsusuri ng pelikula ng mga manunuring nag-aral ng pelikulang Filipino ay mababasa sa mga journal ng akademya. Sa kasamaang-palad, kakaunti ang nakababasa sa mga pagsusuring akademiko, kung ikukumpara sa libo-libong nagbababad sa internet o nakikinig sa radyo o nakikinig sa telebisyon. Ngunit sa pagbabasa ng anumang feedback sa pelikula, laging kilatisin kung ito ay awtentikong pagsusuri o *press release* na pinamudmod ng mga alipores ng prodyuser.

Pangatlo, isang uri ng sukatan hindi sa popularidad kundi sa kalidad ng isang pelikula ang mga taonang pagkilalang ipinamamahagi ng mga grupo ng mga manunulat, kritiko, at iskolar ng pelikulang Filipino, at pati na yaong mga pagkilalang galing sa mga grupo sa ibang bansa. Ilan sa mga *award-giving bodies* na deka-dekada nang nagbibigay ng award ang FAMAS, Gawad Urian ng Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino, ang Star Awards ng mga miyembro ng movie writers associations, ang YCC awards ng Young Critics Circle, at CMAA o Catholic Mass Media Awards. Iba-iba ang pagpapahalaga sa mga artista, teknisyen ng industriya, at ng publiko ng mga award na ito, batay sa ipinakitang oryentasyon, integridad, at kredibilidad ng mga miyembro ng grupong nagbibigay ng award sa pagdaan ng mahabang panahon. Ito'y dahil, tulad ng iba pang mga paligsahan, may mga nagbibigay ng award na ang pagpili ay nakukulayan ng

mga konsiderasyon na walang kinalaman sa kasinangan ng pelikulang kinikilatis.

Sa puntong ito, maitatanong marahil kung ano ang dahilan kung bakit ang ilang pelikula ay nagiging patok sa takilya at ang iba ay hindi at bakit ang mga nananalo ng mga prestihiyong award, madalas ay hindi naman nagiging *blockbuster*. Ang sagot sa mga tanong na ito ay may kinalaman sa dalawang uri ng pelikula sa bansa at ang mga tagapanood ng dalawang pelikulang ito. Pelikulang komersiyal ang karaniwang nagiging patok sa takilya sa maraming dahilan: superstar ang bida, popular na ang istorya ng pelikula sa ibang midya bago pa man ito ginawang pelikula, mahusay ang pagkakagamit sa genre na tanggap na tanggap na ng manonood, tama ang *timing* ng pagpapalabas (Kapaskohan o panahon na walang malakas na kalaban, tulad ng mga *superproduction* ng Hollywood), epektibo ang promosyon ng pelikula sa iba't ibang midya, lalo na kung may kakabit itong kontrobersiya (totoo man o gawa-gawa lamang ng bayarang promotor ng pelikula). Sa katagang sabi, ang sekreto ng *box office* ay nasa estetika ng palabas, na ang diin ay sa nakabibighani, nakaaaliw, nakapagpapalimot sa mga problema sa buhay, lalo na ng mga taong kumai't dili.

Bakit ang mga nananalo ng mga award dito at sa ibang bansa ay karaniwang hindi naman nagiging box-office sensation? Ito'y dahil ang tumatangkilik sa mga pelikulang masining ay yaon lamang maliit na porsiyento ng manonood mula sa gitna at nakatataas na uri na film literate o may pagkaunawa sa sining ng pelikula. Maaaring nagkaroon sila ng *film literacy course* sa mga kurso ng *mass communication* sa paaralan o sa mga seminar ng Cultural Center of the Philippines at ibang institusyong pangkultura. Sa pagiging film literate, nasasakyan nila ang estetikang paloob na nabanggit na, na mauunawaan lamang kung ang manonood ay marunong makinig, magmatyag, magnilay,

at magsuri sa bagong kaisipang inilalahad ng pelikula at sa sarili at masining na paraang ginamit para ipahayag ang kaisipang ito, partikular, sa bihasang orkestrasyon ng sensitibong pagganap, maingat at tamang disenyong pamproduksiyon, malikhaing paggamit ng kamera, intelihenteng editing, at makahulugang paggamit ng tunog at orihinal na musika.

Sa talakayang ito, lumalabas na may dalawang uri ng dating ang pelikulang Filipino batay sa kung anong pelikula ito at sino ang manonood nito. Sa pangkalahatan, pelikulang komersiyal lamang ang nagkahahatak ng libo-libong manonood na lumaki sa estetikang palabas. Sa kabilang banda, maliit pa, ngunit unti-unti nang lumalaki, ang porsiyento ng mga manonood na nakasasakay sa estetikang paloob ng mga art film, alternatibong pelikula, at indie film.

Pero huwag isipin na ganap ang pagkakaiba at walang anumang kinalaman ang dalawang uri ng pelikula sa isa't isa, pagkat may mga pelikulang "namamangka sa dalawang ilog," sa magandang pakahulugan nito. May mga respetadong direktor na nakauunawa ng pelikula bilang sining, na gumagamit sa mga popular na genre ng pelikulang komersiyal para ipahayag ang mga seryosong kaisipang may kinalaman sa pagkatao at lipunang Filipino. Halimbawa, sa *Tuhog* ni Jeffrey Jeturian, ginamit ang mismong anyo at kumbensiyon ng genre ng bomba (e.g., pagpapakita ng katawan ng babae at lalaki na walang saplot, pagtatalik at pagtatalik pa rin, panggagahasa, paninilip, *masturbation*) para isiwalat ang ginagawang eksploytasyon sa kababaihan ng pelikulang bomba. Ito'y tungkol sa isang mag-ina na ginawang seks objek ng isang lalaki — ang ama mismo ng ina, na lolo rin ng dalaga. Nang pagpiyestahan ang istoryang ito sa diyaryo, naisip ng isang prodyuser na bilhin ang istorya sa mag-ina, para umano maisiwalat ang kasamaang ginawa ng ama/lolo sa publiko nang di na pamarisan pa. Pumayag ang mag-ina. Ngunit nang mapanood nila ang pelikula, lumabas na silang mag-ina ang uhaw sa seks kaya sila

ginahasa ng ama/lolo. Ang pakiramdam ng mag-ina ay dalawang beses silang ginahasa, sa tunay na buhay at sa pelikula. Sa syuting, iniwasan ni Jeturian na itutok at ibabad ang mata ng kamera sa katawan ng babae, tulad ng ginagawa ng pelikulang bomba, para maiwasang tingnan ng manonood ang babae bilang seks objek. Pumatok ang bomba sa takilya at naiparating din marahil ng pelikula sa manonood na malaking kasalanan sa kababaihan ang ginagawa ng pelikulang bomba na kinagigiliwan nila.

Ang genre ng aksiyon film ay ginamit ni Erik Matti para isiwalat ang mga krimeng ginagawa ng mga nasa poder. Sa *On the Job*, ipinakita kung paano binabayaran ng mga kongresman ang mga batikang mamamatay-taong nasa bilangguan para burahin ang kanilang mga kaaway sa politika at ilegal na negosyo. Sa pamamahala ng hepe ng kulungan at mga alipores niya, pinalalabas sa gabi ang mga kombik para gawin ang iniutos sa kanila. Pagkatapos ng trabaho, babayaran sila at ibabalik sa kulungan bago mag-umaga. Kinabukasan, parang walang nangyaring masama na dapat ikabahala. Sa *Buy Bust*, matapang na ipinaksa ni Matti ang *drug war* ni Duterte at ang penomenon ng EJK. Isang idealistikong pulis ang nakasama sa operasyon para sukulin at hulihin/patayin ang kilalang *druglord* na pinoprotektahan ng kaniyang mga kapitbahay at kabarangay na nakikinabang sa operasyon ng droga. Sasalakayin ng mga operatiba ang pugad ng druglord, makakaharap nila ang mga tagabaranggay na kabig ng druglord, matatalo at malalampasan ng mga pulis ang mga tagabaranggay, at masusukol sa kaniyang pugad ang druglord. Sa harap ng mga pulis, sasabihin ng druglord na patayin man siya ay magpapatuloy ang *drug operation*, kasi hindi mabubuwag ang sistema ng kalakalan sa bawal na gamot dahil sangkot dito ang mga opisyal ng gobyerno mula pulis hanggang nasa itaas. Tinangkilik ng publiko, film literate man o hindi, ang pelikula at naihatid ni Matti sa manonood ang katotohanang nilalambongan ng kasinungalingan ng may kapangyarihan.

Ang Pelikula sa Pananaw ng Kamalayang Pilipino na Maka-TAO

Maaaring magkaroon ng pelikula na mahusay ang pagtataghi-taghi ng mga elemento ng sining at maganda o malakas ang dating sa publikong manonood, pero may mga inihahatid na kaisipang hindi katanggap-tanggap sa pananaw ng Kamalayang Pilipino na maka-TAO. Sa dulong na ito, ang tanong na sinasagot ay: nakatutulong ba o nakasasagabal ang pelikula sa pagkakamit ng Filipino ng kaganapan ng kaniyang pagkatao sa antas na pisikal, intelektuwal, espirituwal, sikolohikal, politikal, pangkabuhayan, at kultural? Sa partikular, nalipag-sasalangalang, naitataguyod, at napalalakas ba ng pelikula ang mga batayang karapatang pantao na mabuhay nang matiwasay sa isang bansang may sariling ekonomiya, pamahalaan, at kultura, na maipagtanggol at mapaunlad ang bawat etnisidad, na isakatuparan ang pagkakapantay-pantay ng lahat ng kasarian at gender sa lahat ng larangan ng buhay sa lipunan, na madebelop ng bawat Filipino ang kaniyang mga talento sa pamamagitan ng edukasyon, na makilahok sa pamamalakad ng gobyerno at magpahayag ng kanilang mga ideya nang malaya at di sinasagkaan, na pumili ng kaibigan o kasama sa buhay anuman ang kaniyang gender, na idebelop ang kaniyang espirtuwalidad sa tulong ng relihiyon kung ang relihiyong iyon ay hindi mapang-api sa kapwa. (Tiongson 2022)

Sa kabutihang-palad, marami na rin tayong mga pelikulang orihinal, masining, at may integridad mula sa iba-ibang panahon, lugar, prodyuser at direktor na masasabing mabigat ang timbang sa perspektiba ng Kamalayang Pilipino na maka-TAO, bagaman hindi rin naman masasabing perpekto ang mga ito sa lahat ng aspekto. Talakayin natin ang ilan sa mga pelikulang malinaw ang mga karapatang ipinaglalaban, tahasan man o hindi.

Ang *Sister Stella L.*, 1984, ang kauna-unahang pelikulang nagsilwalat ng pagsasamantalang ginagawa ng kapitalista sa mga manggagawa at pag-salvage sa mga lider manggagawa na may integridad, ng konsiyentisasyon ng mga taong-simbahan, at ng pagsensor sa mga pahayagan sa panahon ng batas militar ni Marcos. Pagkatapos ng higit na isang dekada ng panggagaga sa taumbayan, at pagkatapos patayin si Ninoy Aquino sa tarmac ng MIA, inorganisa ng mga progresibong artista ang Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP) noong 1983 nang lumaganap na ang protesta laban kay Marcos sa hanay ng mga gitna at nakatatasa na uri. Kasapi nito ang manunulat na si Pete Lacaba, direktor na Mike de Leon, at ibang artista na lumabas sa pelikula. Hindi matatawaran ang naging ambag ng pelikula sa pagmumulat at pagkumbinse sa manonood na magbalikwas laban sa diktadura na

pangunahing lumalabag sa mga karapatang pantao ng mga mamamayan, kasama na ang karapatan na magpahayag ng pagtutol sa isang pamahalaang walang pakundangang pumapatay sa sinumang hindi nito masawata.

Mabigat din ang timbang ng *Bata, Bata, Paano Ka Ginawa?* sa Kamalayang Pilipino na maka-TAO dahil sa tahasang pagbusbos nito sa mga paniniwalang patriyarkal na kinokondena ang mga babaeng sumasalungat sa tradisyonal na konsepto ng "mabuting" asawa at ina. Ito na marahil ang isa sa pinakaunang pelikula na ang bida ay isang babaeng may dalawang anak na pinalalaki, isa sa asawang hiniwalayan niya dahil pinipilit siyang maging maybahay na lamang, at ang pangalawa sa kinakasama na iniwan din siya dahil mababa ang tingin sa kaniya ng ina nito. Nagtatrabaho si Lea sa isang *women's crisis center*, kung saan humihingi ng tulong araw-araw ang mga babaeng biktima ng pambubugbog ng asawang macho, o iniwan na lamang ng asawa para sa ibang babae, o kumakayod nang mag-isa para buhayin ang mga anak at asawang batugan. Di tulad ng maraming drama na lagi na lang nagiging "mabuti" (i.e., masunuring) na asawa o anak o kapatid ang bidang babae sa pagwawakas ng pelikula, ang itinatampok at pinapanigan ng pelikula ay ang babaeng abandonada at "imoral" ngunit tunay na nagmamahal at nagmamalasakit para sa kaniyang dalawang anak mga kapwa babaeng biktima ng karahasan. Ang pelikula ang isa na marahil sa pinakaradikal na pagtatampok sa isang malayo-sa-ideyal na babae bilang bidang dapat hangaan.

Tulad ng *Bata, Bata*, radikal din ang pelikulang *Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros* sapagkat ito ang isa sa pinakaunang pelikulang hindi ginawang katatawanan at api-apihan ang bakla at hindi ipinakita ang kabaklaan bilang sakit na dapat gamotin, tulad ng matutunghayan sa mga pelikulang gay na pinasikat ni Dolfy. Sa halip, ang bunsong anak na bakla ay tanggap ng ama at dalawang nakatatandang machong kapatid bilang kapalit ng kanilang asawa/ina na yumao na. Pero hindi nanatili si Maximo bilang baklang kapatid na ang halaga ay ang paninilbihan lamang niya sa pamilya. Ipinakita ng pelikulang kayang panindigan ni Maximo ang pagmamahal niya sa pulis na kaaway ng kaniyang ama at mga kapatid na kawatan, at may lakas din siya ng loob na ipagpatuloy ang kaniyang pag-aaral para makaahon sa kahirapang sumisira sa pagkatao niya at kaniyang pamilya. Malaki ang nagawa ng pelikula para burahin ang mga napakatagal nang mga stigma at prehuwisyo sa kabaklaan at baguhin ang tingin sa bakla para igalang siya bilang taong walang pinag-iba sa ating lahat.

Sa pananaw ng Kamalayang Pilipino na maka-TAO, ang matitimbang na pelikula ay iyong may mga mensahang mapagpalaya at para sa pagkakapantay-pantay ng lahat ng mamamayan, anuman ang kanilang kasarian, relihiyon, edad, lahi, etnisidad, okupasyon, o sektor. Hindi katanggap-tanggap sa kamalayang ito ang mga pelikulang nagtataguyod ng mga pananaw at halagahang elitista, pasista, kolonyal, at patriyarkal.



Nicanor G. Tiongson

The works of Dr. Nicanor Tiongson cut across the entire spectrum of creative and scholarly achievements that reflect his position in both the academic and artistic community.

As a playwright, Tiongson focused on the use of fiction as a vehicle for innovation; his samples of dramatics reflect not only the richness of imagination but an in-depth knowledge of Philippine culture opening possibilities for effective thematic execution for an ever-changing audience.

His scholarly works — ranging from the study of traditional genres in dramatics to in-depth analyses of elements of popular culture, specifically in film, are milestones in the academic field. As serious student of Philippine literature, theater and cinema can gloss over the books written by Tiongson with its in-depth research and scope of knowledge. His analyses go beyond the dictation of history but address the socio-cultural relevance of what a number feel negligible if not ordinary and mundane.

As one of the founding members of the Manunong ng Pelikulang Pilipino as well as a tireless advocate of Philippine cultural research embodied by his books and masterful engagements in the classroom as an academician, Tiongson was awarded the Gawad ng Pananaliksik ng Pelikulang Pilipino by the Film Development Council of the Philippines for 2024. His contributions have — beyond question — helped shape our understanding of Philippine literature, theater and cinema as how they are understood for their significance today.

"Being at Kamalayang Pilipino na Mula 'an" edited by University of the Philippines (UP) Professor Emeritus Dr. Nicanor G. Tiongson and published under PUP Research Institute for Culture and Language — Center for Philippine Studies (MCL-CPIS) where his article "Pano Nga Sa Magkaka ng Pelikula" came from was a finalist for the 41st National Book Awards.

KONGKLUSYON

Sa pagwawakas, nais ko lamang ipahayag ang pangangailangan sa ating panahon ng mga kritiko ng pelikula na 1) nakauunawa ng lengguwahe o wika ng pelikula, 2) may kaalaman sa kasaysayan ng Filipinas at ng pelikulang Filipino, 3) may pagkaunawa na ang pelikula ay hinuhubog ng lipunan (*social artifact*) at maaari ring maging tagapagbago ng lipunan (*social catalyst*), at 4) sumusulat sa isang paraang malay, mapanuri, at malinaw para maabot ang karaniwang manonood at mahimok itong tangkilikin ang mga pelikulang may pananaw at mensaheng mapagpalaya.

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Kung Bakit Pinapanood Ko (pa rin) ang mga Pelikula ni Sharon Cuneta

(at nina Judy Ann Santos at Iza Calzado)

JDI BARRIOS-LEBLANC

Halos apatnapung (40) taon na ang nakararaan, naglathala ako ng fan essay sa *Kultura* magazine ng Cultural Center of the Philippines. Sa sanaysay na iyon, tinalakay ko ang ilan sa teen-age films ni Sharon at sinubukang suriin kung ano ang posibleng nagugustuhan ng mga manonood sa kaniyang mga pelikula. Na-republish ang sanaysay na ito sa textbook, at dahil dito, mas marami ang nakabasa. Maraming beses kong sinubukang magsulat ng iba pang fan essays, pero naging abala sa pananaliksik tungkol sa teatro, naglathala ng koleksiyon ng mga tula, at nag-explore din ng romance novels. Sa madaling salita, nalimot na sa baul ang gusto ko sana noong palawakin pa — ang pag-aaral kung ano ang hikayat ng artista at sine sa manonood.

Fast forward. Hindi na ako sa sinehan nanonood ng pelikulang Filipino ngayon. Hinahanap ko na lang ang mga ito sa TFC, Prime Video, at Netflix. Samakatwid, dito sa ibang bansa, home viewing na ang panonood ng pelikulang Filipino. Limang artistang babae ang kinatutuwaan kong panoorin ngayon. Siyempre, si Sharon pa rin, pero kasabay niya sina Judy Ann Santos, Iza Calzado, Angel Locsin, at Kathryn Bernardo. Sa sanaysay na ito, ang unang tatlo ang pagtutuunan ko ng pansin.

Si Sharon sa Family of Two

Kusina at garden na ang espasyo ni Sharon Cuneta bilang Maricar sa pelikulang *Family of Two* (Cineko Productions, 2023, isinulat ni Mel Mendoza del Rosario, idinirehe Nuel Crisostomo Naval). Bilang biyuda, umilikot na ang buhay ni Sharon sa pagpapakain ng anak (breakfast, baon, hapunan, at complete meal siyempre, na may kasama pang dessert) at paglilipat-lipat ng halaman sa garden.

Bakit nga ba nakapagpapalibang or nagdudulot ng "pleasure" ang panonood ng pelikulang ito? Una, para sa manonood na halos kasing-edad ni Sharon, katuwa-tuwa na kung paanong nagbago ang mga karanasan, problema, at hangarin nila sa buhay, ganoon din ang sa bida. Kung dati umikot ang mundo ng tinedyer na si Sharon sa unang pag-ibig, ngayon naman ang hinaharap ni Maricar ay relasyon sa anak, pagsubok sa paggamit ng internet para may maka-date (at posibleng bagong karelasyon), pag-aaral ng pagmamaneho, at pagkamit ng natitirang pangarap (pagtatapos ng kolehiyo) — mga bagay na posibleng kinakaharap din ng manonood.

Ikalawa, dahil meron nang feministang direksiyon ang pelikula sa pagpapasya ni Sharon na alamin kung ano ang tunay na makapagpapasaya sa kaniya — at ito na nga ang makapagtapos ng kolehiyo. Mahalaga ito, dahil nitong nakaraang mga dekada, marami na ring kababaihang manonood ang unti-unting mas nakauunawa ng mga usaping mahalaga sa kababaihan.

Ikatlo, dahil may iba pang elemento ng pelikula na may familiarity at predictability. Halimbawa, katuwa-tuwa na ang kaibigang kapitbahay ay si Jackie Lou Blanco, na alam ng marami na kaibigan ni Sharon sa totoong buhay. O kaya ang posibleng ka-love team na si Tonton Gutierrez na kasabayan din ni Sharon noong araw.

Kaugnay ng ikatlo ang ikaapat. Dahil nga Sharon Cuneta film ito, alam mo nang ang sentral na tauhan ay mabuting tao — hindi kontrabida, ni hindi bida-kontrabida. Sa madaling salita, likable character. Iyon bang puwede kang mag-cheer leader at umasang sa pagtatapos ng pelikula, masaya ang ending, masaya ka rin sa panonood, everybody happy.



Si Judy Ann Santos at sa Ang Dalawang Mrs. Reyes

Ang ganito ring predictability, lalo na ang kaniyang kahusayan sa pagganap, ang nakapagpapahanga sa akin kay Judy Ann Santos. Sa pelikulang *Ang Dalawang Mrs. Reyes* (ABS-CBN Film Productions, Quantum Films, The IdeaFirst Company, 2018, isinulat nina Jun Robles Lana at Elmer Gatchalian, idinirehe ni Jun Lana), litaw na litaw na kung gaano kahusay si Judy Ann sa pagpapalyak sa manonood, ganoon din siya kahusay sa pagpapatawa. Nakatulong din na kasama niya sa pagdadala ng pelikula sina Angelica Panganiban (ang isa pang Mrs. Reyes) at Carmi Martin (biyanan naman ni Angelica).

Ngunit muli, babalikan natin ang naunang tanong. Ano ang appeal ni Judy Ann Santos sa manonod? Para dito, kailangan nating balikan ang kaniyang naunang mga teleserye, ang *Mara Clara* (1992) at ang *Esperanza* (1997). Sa mga teleseryeng ito, palaging api si Judy Ann, pero matapang, mabait, at mahusay, kung kaya't nakaigpaw sa mga pagsubok at nanaig sa dulo. At sino nga bang nakaranas ng kaapihan, dahil man sa kapamilyang masama ang ugali, kasarian, katayuan sa buhay, trabaho, karahasan ng estado, o kung anumang, ang hindi rin magnanais na maligpawan ito at magtagumpay sa wakas? Samakatwid, ang pang-akit ni Judy Ann ay ang pagiging sympathetic character ng kaniyang mga papel na nakapupukaw sa ating mga kalooban.

Gayon pa man, ang talagang kamangha-mangha ay ang kakayahan ni Judy Ann na maintindihan natin ang maaaring tawagin bilang "interrogative characters" — na ang ibig sabihin ay mga tauhan na mas komplikado dahil may ginagawa ring nakalinis. Una ko na itong nakita sa teleseryeng *Starla* (2019) kung saan abogado siyang may masasamang plano para sa komunidad. Sa teleseryeng ito, nagawa ni Judy Ann na mas bigyan ng iba't ibang dimensiyon ang karakter upang higit na maunawaan natin ang nagtulak sa mga aksiyon ng abogado.

Maihalalintulad ito sa kainis-inis na mga aksiyong ginawa ni Judy Ann sa *Ang Dalawang Mrs. Reyes* — panghahamak sa mecho dancer, pag-eentrap sa dating asawa, pagsusulat ng bukas na liham sa social media. Sa halip na tunay na kasuklaman natin ang tauhan niya, may bahagi nating naiintindihan din ito.

At dahil tiyak na tiyak kong kung hindi man ako mailiyak sa panonood ng teleserye o pelikula ni Judy Ann, mapatatawa ako, lagi kong ikatutuwang manood sa anumang pelikula niya.





Joi Barrios-Leblanc

Teacher Filmmaker and Philippine Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. She previously served as an associate professor at the University of the Philippines Diliman and taught at the Osaka University of Foreign Studies, UCLA, and UCL. She has won fourteen national literary awards and was among the 100 women chosen as Weavers of History for the Philippine Centennial Celebration for her contributions to literature. In 2004, she also received the TDWG (Ten Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service) Award.

Si Iza Calzado at ang Etiquette for Mistresses

Totoo, alam ko namang hindi lang si Iza ang bidang babae sa *Etiquette for Mistresses* (ABS-CBN Film Productions, 2015, istorya ni Chito Roño, isinulat nina Patrick John Valencia at Kris G. Gazmen, idinirihe ni Chito Roño at batay sa librong *Etiquette for Mistresses* ni Julie Yap Daza). Siyempre, kasama naman niya sa pelikula sina Claudine Barreto, Kris Aquino, Kim Chiu, at Cheena Crab at mahuhusay din naman sila.

Pero bakit ako fan ni Iza? Una, dahil bilang teleserye fan, nahusayan ako sa kaniya sa *Ang Iyo ay sa Akin* (2020) at ikinatuwa ko ang versatility niya bilang Darna noong 2022 (sa totoo lang, nanay ng bidang Darna), na may kahalo pang action. Ikatlo, dahil swak ang ekspresyon sa mukha, quiet ang acting, pero powerful ang presence, lalo na sa horror film na napanood ko rin - ang *Ilawod* (2017).

Partikular na sa pelikulang *Etiquette for Mistresses* ang ikaapat na dahilan. Dahil kapag pinanonood natin si Iza, hindi natin nalisip na siya si Iza. Nag-iiba siya batay sa tauhang ginagampanan. Sa pelikulang ito, halimbawa, kapani-paniwala siya bilang matapang at mahusay na abogado, na pumayag sa mahirap na sitwasyon. At sa pelikula, bagamat mahusay din si Claudine sa kaniyang baliw-baliwan moments, maayos naman si Kim Chiu, at nakatatawa si Cheena, kay Iza ko naramdaman ang sakit at pait ng kababaihang madalas na inilalarawan bilang kontrabida at masamang tao. Naalala ko pa nga si Ate Vi sa pioneering na pelikulang *Relasyon* (1982) ni Ishmael Bernal, na unang tumalakay sa ganitong mga relasyon.

Marahil, nakikita ko kay Iza ang artista na posibleng simboliko ng hangad ko para sa kababaihan sa kasalukuyan. Measuring nagpapaka-Darna dahil sinisikap magampanan nang sabay-sabay ang lahat - trabaho, pagpapamilya, pagkalinga sa kapwa babae. Ngunit kasabay nito, pinoproseso ang mga sandali ng kalungkutan at kasayahan at ng kahinaan at lakas nang walang hysteria o overacting kundi ng katatagan.

Ikinalilibang natin ang pinanonood batay na rin sa kung na-saan rin tayo sa ating mga buhay. Salamat kina Sharon, Judy Ann, at Iza sa kanilang mga karakter na bukal ang loob, matatalino, at may paninindigan. Salamat at may pelikula sa panahon ng kilig, panahon ng pagbangon laban sa pang-aapi, at panahong may kumpiyansa na tayong masa-salag ng mala-Darna bracelet ang anumang ipukol ng buhay.

PATRICK FLORES



REVISITING SISTER STELLA I





In 2023, the Asian Film Archive in Singapore invited me to introduce Mike de Leon's 1984 film *Sister Stella L.* before its screening at the exemplary auteur's retrospective. It was a comprehensive review of his corpus, including all his feature films and early and recent documentaries. It was a great chance for me to revisit my undergraduate Humanities thesis at the University of the Philippines in the nineties on the filmography of De Leon and the motif of power distributed across his oeuvre. The film *Sister Stella L.* stems from this discourse of how power ramifies intricately and pervasively in both the subjectivity and the society. De Leon's full-length debut, *Itim* (1976), an explication of his cinematic poetics and politics, already creates an aesthetic context in which masculine authority intersects with feudal domination, structures that are so overwhelming that it would take the afterlife and the spirit of the aggrieved dead to rectify human history via a subversive séance. The stranglehold of institutions linked up with patriarchal and class ascendancy would be deeply felt in his next film *Kung Mangarap Ka't Magising* (1977) in which an illicit amorous desire is suppressed in the name of the tradition of marriage. From these two films sprang sharper evocations of the authoritarian personality, so to speak, as may be seen in the lascivious autocracy of the Ilocano father in *Kisapmata* (1981), the narcotic imperialism of the Japanese in *Kakabakaba Ka Ba* (1980), and the grisly fascism in *Batch '81* (1982).

It is, however, in *Sister Stella L.* that we sense a consolidation of agency amid the sufficient demonstration of power in the fields of religion and labor. The coming together of religion and labor is significant, particularly in light of the fact that the Philippine Independent Church that emerged during the Philippine-American War at the beginning of the 20th century was founded by Isabelo de los Reyes, who also initiated the first labor union in the Philippines and was a foremost folklorist. Needless to say, the Catholic Church played a vital role in deposing the Marcos government in the eighties, with the iconography of nuns facing tanks prominently etched in the historical imagination of the broad coalition of progressive forces against the dictatorship. The reconsideration of the country's quintessential patriot Jose Rizal in De Leon's *Bayaning Third World* (2000), a heroic figure that is at once political and spiritual, may well follow through this relay in which power condenses in an at once radical and sacral figure from a post-colonial phantasmagoria. The Ka Dencio character in *Sister Stella L.* is simultaneously a labor leader and a martyr; Stella in her stirring address before the union would draw a connection between Ka Dencio and Christ, casting both as militant, and therefore, historical.



If not now, then when?

The film *Sister Stella L.* revolves around the morphing of the political consciousness of a nun named Stella L whose fellows in the congregation are hemmed in an internal debate and crisis, one that requires moral commitments in light of the striking workers in a cooking oil factory, beyond the solitude of the convent that is seemingly nearby. Such debate and crisis are echoed in one of the songs of the film called *Sangandaan*, or *Crossroads*, which might have been the original title of the film. Stella, previously oblivious and perhaps even clueless, finds herself at this crossroad, or intersection or convergence, that would demand from her urgent choices and involvement in the struggles of others. This is a legible layer in the film. Around it are other dimensions, which may not be readily apparent as political. But surely they are critical in honing a nun's awareness and resolve. I am referring to the emotional and psychological restlessness of the unwed mother in Stella L's care and the unresolved erotic and romantic life between Sister Stella L and her former boyfriend, who is a journalist covering the strike and whose freedom of expression is being tested by the Martial Law press.

Sister Stella L. was exhibited in 1984, two years before the uprising that overthrew the Marcos regime of almost 20 years. It starred Vilma Santos, a former child star and at some point in her career typified the mistress or the other woman who is also the modern woman. It was produced by Lily Monteverde of Regal Films, a studio known for popular genre films which began its business

in the sixties, and to some extent was a departure for both the star and the producer. It was released in July 1984, the same day that the film *Bukas Lu-luhod ang mga Tala* was screened. *Sister Stella L.* was clobbered at the box-office by the latter which spoke of a heroine who rose from poverty through her singing talent. The art critic Alice Guillermo remarked in her review that the film is talky, which was needed, according to her, in talky times when Filipinos were absorbed in a ferment, engaged in discourse on the issues of the moment. There is a great deal of theater in the film, too, if I may add, as seen in the robust ensemble of the support cast and in what I would refer to as the Brechtian turn at the end when the filmmaker complicates the cinematic proscenium and introduces a persuasive activist pedagogy: she finally speaks to us directly, a confrontation of moving image and no longer the anonymous revelation in the confessional or the contemplation in the cloister. Such a device may well anticipate the more decisive self-reflexivity in *Aliwan Paradise* (1992) of the Southern Winds (1993) ASEAN anthology in which de Leon lays bare the apparatus of both media and social realism in the depiction of politicized poverty and populist entertainment. That said, Stella in the film undergoes the process of formation, her *bildung*, as it were, in the political culture and the emancipation of the habit, alongside the critique of religious and state institutions. The last frames containing her homily and oration among comrades as well as her report to the public of how the investigation of injustice has



VILMA SANTOS
"SISTER STELLA L."

PELIKULA NIMIKE DE LEÓN

spread all over the country offer a national and popular (because filmic) assemblage in which the totality of the situation is particularized in the experience of a transforming, transformative agonist.

It is tempting to characterize *Sister Stella L.* as a film on awakening; and the final scenes lead us to such an expectation as the nun stands in solidarity with the working class and delivers her own speech on the unerring Christianity inhering in social justice amid state and capitalist violence, which would include the threat on her own body. The alternation between radicalization and traumatization prepares the ground for a reversal and also the elaboration of the fate of the Philippine body politic within the democratic space of the post-Marcos milieu. Here, the returning revolutionary is disillusioned by the oligarchic revival and para-military resurgence with Corazon Aquino at the helm as gleaned in Lino Brocka's *Orapronobis* (1989), which opens with the vigilante execution of a priest in what is likely Mindanao. Such violence reaches the point of saturnalia in our time with the collateral damage of extra-judicial killings dramatized in chilling detail by Brillante Mendoza's *Kinatay* (2009) and *Alpha, the Right to Kill* (2018). De Leon's demystification of the EDSA mythology was, in fact, prominently quoted in Singapore: "The social order hardly changed after the revolt. All we did was get rid of a dictator and his family, and we didn't even do it properly. The Marcoses should have stood trial and been thrown into jail. This didn't happen because the revolt turned into a religious fiesta and was hailed as a peaceful revolution—the ultimate oxymoron." Indeed, the enlightened and progressive religion embodied by the persona of Stella would be negated by the very upheaval it adumbrated. The political theology of liberation would fail in the face of pre-Marcos colonialism.

Finally, the L in the title *Sister Stella L.* pertains to Legaspi to distinguish the main character from her namesake and foil in the convent who is Stella Bautista, the emblematic nun of the streets. That said, L as a hand signal may well stand for *Laban*, or *Fight*, the battle cry which defined the motley opposition to the rule of the ailing Marcos. But, knowing the producer, who was fondly called Mother Lily, it could be something else, perhaps something more liberative, because inevitably libidinal.



Patrick Flores

is Chief Curator of National Gallery Singapore and concurrently Professor of Art Studies at the Department of Art Studies at the University of the Philippines. He is the Director of the Philippine Contemporary Art Network. He was a Visiting Fellow at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. in 1999. Among his publications are *Painting History: Revisions in Philippine Colonial Art* (1999); *Past Peripheral: Curation in Southeast Asia* (2008); *Art After War: 1945-1969* (2015); and *Raymundo Albano: Texts* (2017). He was a Guest Scholar of the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles in 2014. He was the Artistic Director of Singapore Biennale 2019 and Curator of the Taiwan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2022.



REVISITING
HIMALA

Q & A WITH PEPE DIOKNO

PEPE DIOKNO



Why did you think of doing a film based on the musical? What unique experience would you want the audience to go through with this new movie?

In 2019, I watched a staging of *Himala*, and it changed my life. It was the most visceral experience I'd ever had in the theater, resonating deeply with me as a Filipino. I was struck by how Sir Ricky transformed the 1982 film, expanding the story from a single-protagonist drama to a multi-character satire.

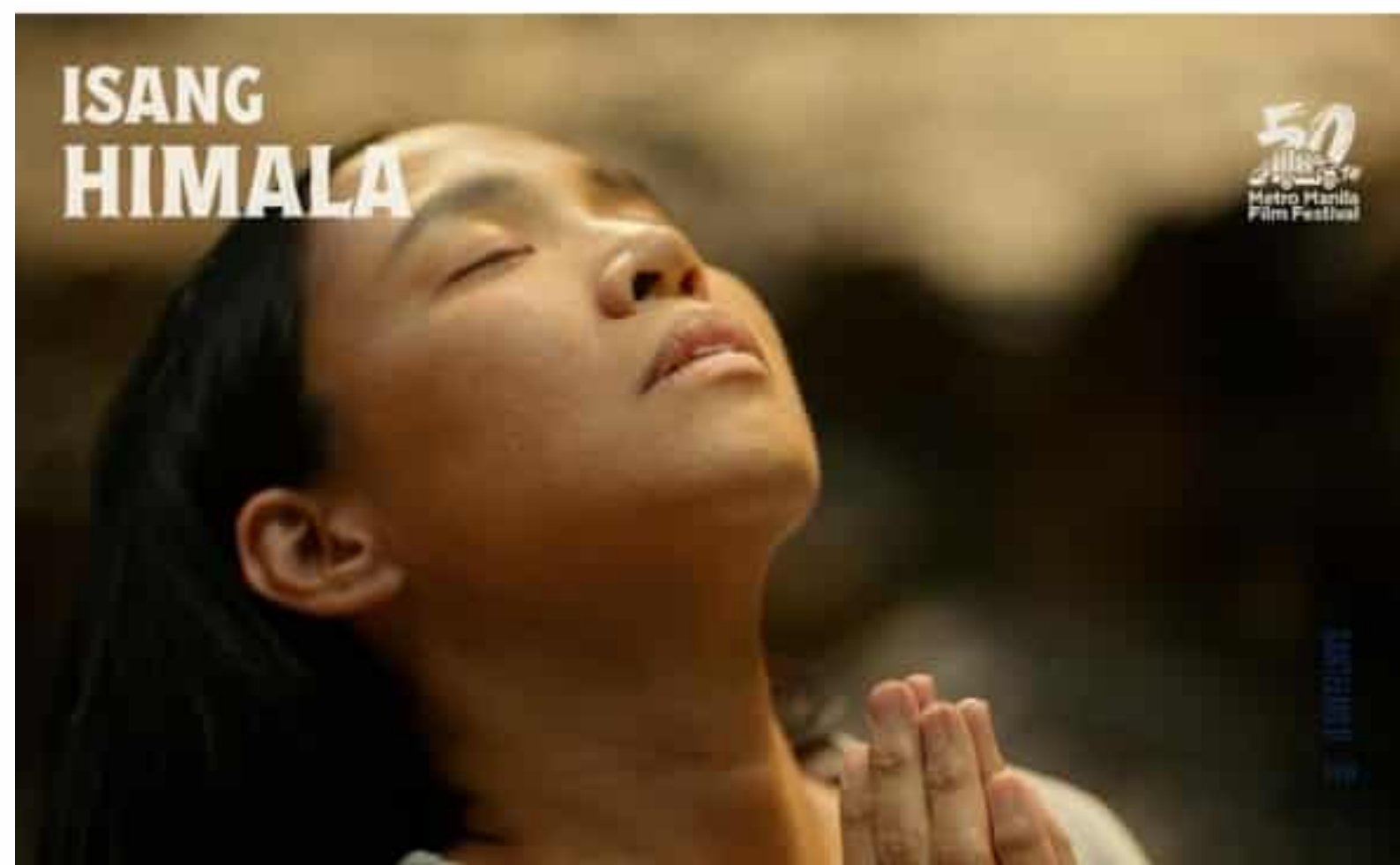
More than four decades since the original film's premiere, *Himala* still has so much urgency and power. It explores themes of blind faith, greed-fueled politics, and fanaticism—issues as pressing today as they were under the dictatorship of the 1980s. With everything that's happening in the world today, I felt compelled to bring this story back to a wider audience through cinema.

Coming from the classic movie *Himala* by three National Artists (Ishmael Bernal, Ricky Lee and Nora Aunor), how did *Isang Himala* come about?

Isang Himala is based on the classic film *Himala* (1982), which premiered in the 1982 Metro Manila Film Festival, competed at the Berlin Film Festival, and was named Best Film by the CNN Asia Pacific Screen Awards in 2008.

In 2003, *Himala* screenwriter Ricky Lee, along with composer Vincent De Jesus, adapted the film into a musical play, which was first staged at CCP in 2003 (starring Mae Bayot as Elsa). The latest staging was by Sandbox Collective and 9 Works Theatrical in 2018 and 2019, starring Aicelle Santos as Elsa, and this earned multiple Gawad Buhay Awards.

Now, we're bringing *Himala* back to its cinematic origins, re-imagined by Sir Ricky Lee himself and me, featuring the brilliant cast of the latest staging, and a new rock musical arrangement by Vincent de Jesus.





CreaZion Studios UxS KAPITOL FILMS

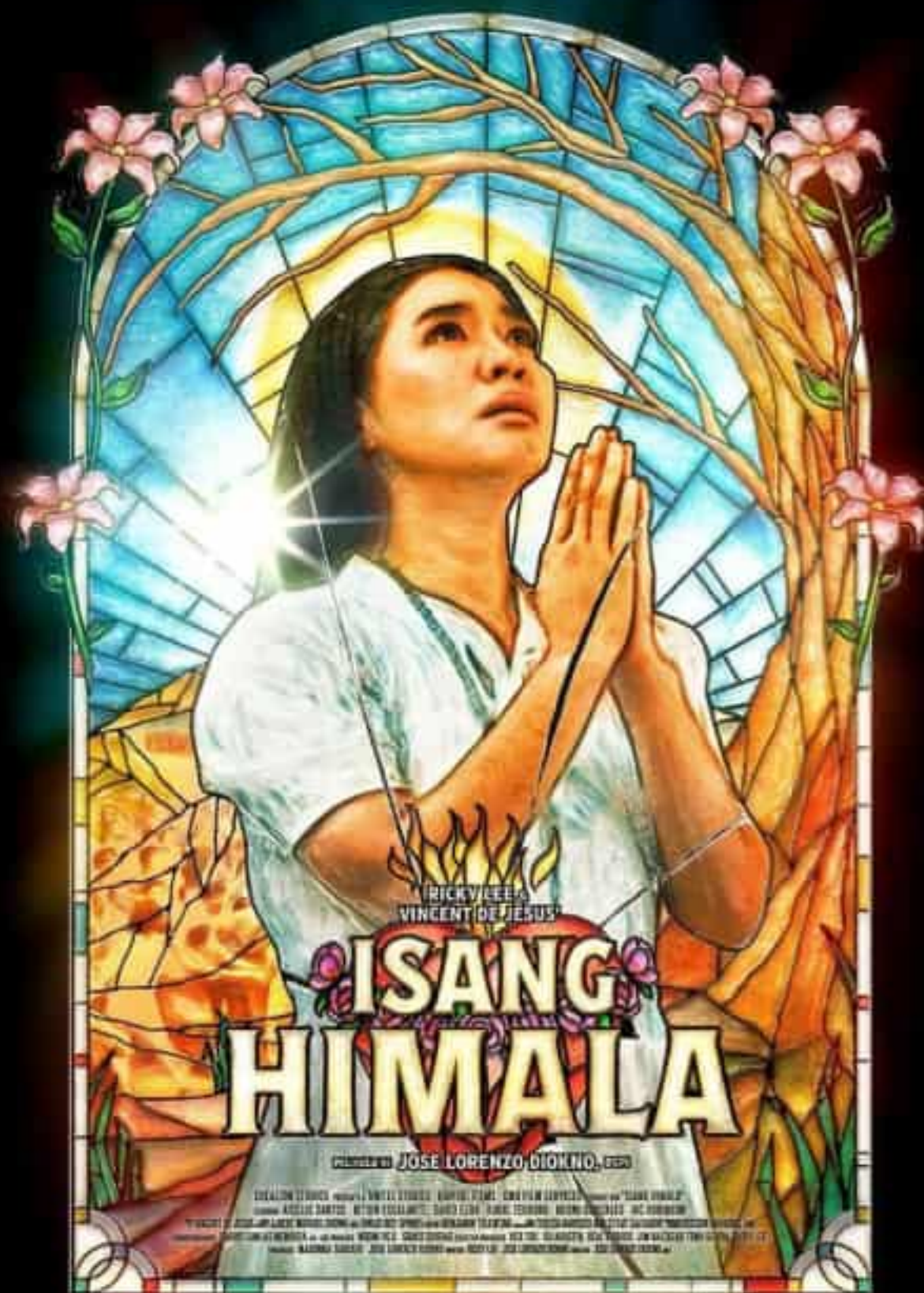
What were the challenges faced by your team in doing this material which is now part of the 50th edition of the Metro Manila Film Festival?

Of course, adapting a beloved work comes with its own pressures, but Sir Ricky [Lee] himself gave us his blessing and guidance (he is a producer in this project, as well as a scriptwriter) so I'm very grateful. Technically, we decided to record the songs live rather than using lip-sync, to retain the power of all the performances. This required a lot of preparation and coordination from both the cast and crew. We also decided to reimagine Cupang completely and build it on a set, to create a new world that has never been seen before; something in the middle of real and surreal, familiar and unfamiliar. This is the biggest production I've ever done.

Simply put, how different is this version from the musical and from the classic *Himala* film?

I will quote Sir Ricky [Lee]: "I wrote *Himala* in 1982, but the issues addressed by the film—idolatry and fanaticism over a single savior, extreme poverty and inequality, social injustices, false news and distortion of the truth to control the populace — sadly are still relevant issues in the Philippines today. What would be a real miracle is when in future this film would just be a distant memory of how things were then." I hope that viewers will be moved by Elsa's story, entertained by the town, and that the film will cause us to pause, reflect, and change our ways.

MULA SA DIREKTOR NG GOMBURZA
ISANG OBRANG AANTIG SA PUSO NATING LAHAT



AN OFFICIAL ENTRY TO THE 50TH METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

UxS

What are your plans for your movie *Isang Himala*? How will you make sure that more people will get access to, and experience, this new film of yours?

I'm very excited to be part of the 50th MMFF, alongside a really great batch of films. The best way to watch *Himala* is in the theater, and I'm glad that we have that platform. After MMFF, we aim to bring the film to more audiences locally and, hopefully, internationally. I think *Isang Himala* will resonate with anyone who has ever grappled with faith, despair, love, truth, and hope. This is a Filipino story with a universal message.



**Jose Lorenzo
"Pepe" Diokno**

is a film director, producer, and screenwriter. His first feature film, *Engkwentro*, won the Lion of the Future Award and the Orizzonti Prize at the 2009 Venice Film Festival. His latest film, *Gomburza*, was both a critical and commercial success, winning seven awards at the 2023 Metro Manila Film Festival, including Best Director, spending five weeks in cinemas, and debuting at #1 on Netflix. His latest film, the musical *Isang Himala*, will premiere on Dec. 25, 2024 at the 50th Metro Manila Film Festival.

S U B L I M I N A L

FRANK CIMATU

I

In the movies
Twenty-four images
Will parade in just
One second to create
An illusion of motion.
Your eyes will not
Detect this unless
You are a cat
Which is quick
Enough and even
Attacks the TV
Because, like your
Brain, it knows.
Advertising men
Know. They place
One frame of soft
Drinks in the
Middle of a kiss.
You feel thirsty
And buy that
Particular brand
You thought it
Was love longing.
It is not

II

In Jaws 5
Frames were cut out
Of every print where
The shark attacked
Robert Shaw. There are
250 prints piled up
In a warehouse
As it had been
Shown over the world.
The censor says, "Go
Into the vaults
And cut five frames
From every single
Print. That means
You are cutting one-
Fifth of a second.
There is nobody
Other than a trained
Film editor, who
Would know whether
The one-fifth
Of a second
Was in
Or out."

(from Index on Censorship 3/91)

III

In a day,
If you earned
An Hour's worth
Of happy times. You
Considered that
Day happy. The
First Lady says:
Let the children
Watch cartoons.
Let the adults
Watch escapist
Movies. Let them
Spend a year's
Time watching
The true, the good
And the beatific.
I will build a film
Palace. Decades
From now people
Will wake up
From a generation
Of nightmares
And say they had
A beautiful dream.

IV

In the Manila
Film Center, I
Watched an art
Film. Tired of
Subtitles, my
Eyes wandered at
the walls. Suddenly
Limbs and torsos
Were reaching out
On the walls then
Miraculously smoothed
Out like magic
Slate. I blinked.
The screen moaned
In ecstasy. I walked
Out. On the baywalk
I saw a girl offering
Her breast to an old
Man. A smashed cat.
Children sniffing glue.
My eyes said: "You
Saw nothing. You
Are thirsty. Relax
See a movie."

HOWL, O ANG KUWAGONG CAPAMPANGAN*

Kay Ada, para maintindihan mo kung bakit kami ganito

I saw the best minds ng ating henerasyon, nawasak ng kabaliwan, hubad at dayukdok
 Tayong naghahanap sa Abenida of broken dreams, the oldest street of Colon,
 Ang Bangkerohan, Calle Unreal, ang Session Road na binalot ng fog, hinahanap
 Ang amats na wala nang babalikan, ang trip na wala nang balikbalik
 Nagsimula tayo sa trip na ito na mga heir-pretenders of the Asian miracle
 Pinagtatawanan ang mga kapitbahay wearing our Bantex and Bata shoes
 Knowing our shiny future would be illuminating all the motionless world of Time between
 And then, para tayong iniwan sa time warp, iniwan with our KBT-shirts and donning
 our farmer hats,
 Barong at tapis with handkerchiefs and little bilaos by the side of the airport tarmac
 Sa gitna ng unforgiving na araw hanggang sabihan ng ating mga guro na postponed
 Ang trip ni Madam learning only when we're in college na pinabalik niya pala ang Boeing jet
 Sa New York kasi may nakalimutan siyang bilhin sa Bloomingdales na mga couple of earrings
 And so for half a century we're in that suspended political tundra called the developing nation
 Nagpapakasasa sa Student Canteen viewed with that plastic filter to create the illusion of color
 Na ang pula ay laging nasa taas kasi nga sky, ang red sa gitna at ang green for the consistent grass
 And so we saw the best minds of our generation colorized by Hanna Barbera at Ron Ely
 Hinehele ni Armida, Carmen Pateña at ni Nora sa Makulay na Daigdig niya kahit black and
 white lang naman
 And then inatake tayo na parang Pearl Harbor ng mga naghihiganteng robots kasabay ng
 Nailclippers na galing din Japan
 At noon pa man we were caught with the solitary undertaking ng Daimos at Mazinga
 Laban sa choreographed unity for victory ng Balatack, Voltes V, Star Rangers at Apat na Sikat
 At nang nacoconfuse na tayo sa growing political unrest sa TV at sa drama ng Boazanion Empire
 Ay biglang pinutol ng Presidente ang ating Friday obsession dahil daw sa obsessive violence nito
 At all the while sinamahan natin ang ating itay sa paghahanap ng kuweba at paghuhukay
 Ng bunker at pagimbak ng mga galon ng tubig dahil mahuhulog na ang lumalagablab na Skylab
 At nang lumalapit na ang Great Foreboding ay nagpakita uli ang Presidente para sabihin na
 Hindi pa ito ang end of the world at nanalo si Melanie Marquez na Miss International
 noong Nobyembre
 At napunta tayo sa bagong dekada na binisita ng Santo Papa at ang Batas Militar ay binuwag
 nang ganoon na lang

At si Ninoy ay pinaslang kung saan tayo nagsong-and-dance noon sa paghihintay kay Madam
 At umulan ng dilaw parang noong inilibing si Arcadio Buendia na nahulog ang mga dilaw
 na bulaklak
 At kinulayan ang buong lupain na parang niyebe at kailangang palain ang mga ito
 para makadaan si Ninoy
 And I saw the best minds of my generation going to Liwasang Bonifacio after and some of
 them stopped coming home
 And some of us took to the streets nang hindi na natin nakayanan and thought we have
 demolished the Potemkin government
 And the last we saw of him alive in the country was him singing Dahil sa Iyo with Imelda at the
 balcony window of Malacañang
 And later Anthony Castelo sang Balatkayo to the crying crowd, O kay sakit naman nasayang
 lang ang pag-ibig ko
 And then someone brought up with one hand the smiling Wengweng like the Sto. Niño
 rocking like a pendulum to save us
 And then he left us, Our Father, to be on our own in a helicopter like the end of Jesus Christ
 Superstar
 And as we're left preparing our family we joined our objects of our libog purgatoried by their
 torcos night after night
 Nakisabay tayo sa kilokilometrong prusisyon ng libing ni Thelma Cabras Maloloy-on sa Cebu
 aka Claudia Zobel na bangag nang isalpak ang kotse sa flyovers
 Nakipagsiksikan tayo sa takilya para sa "Shame" at "Sinner or Saint" pero di natin siya nakilala
 Sa huli niyang sine bilang martir na pokpok na si Dhalie sa "Kapit sa Patalim"
 Ilan sa atin nang yumaman ay sumama sa Vatican tour dala ang placards nilang
 "Beatify Julie Vega!"
 At di nila naalala na noong inexhume si Claudia Zobel after so many years ay buo pa rin ang
 Ingenue countenance niya
 Ginamit natin ang suicide note ni Delia Dueñas Smith aka Pepsi Paloma bilang password
 Ngunit hindi ang cognizance niya, matapos siyang reypin as a punchline, na naninirahan
 Na nga tayo sa mga baliw na planeta at "ngayon di pa rin alam kung bakit tayo nandito
 Puwede bang itigil muna ang pag-ikot ng mundo?" Nang pinaslang ang bugaw niyang si
 Doc Rey de la Cruz
 Hindi natin nirecognize ito na arc of redemption, Si Stella Strada akala makakababa sa orbit
 Tumigil sa pagiging bold star pero ayaw takasan ng nakaraan, hinihiwa ang kamay sa bawat
 audition na hinihindian
 Nagborn-again pero ayaw lubayan ng mga demonyo, kaya sa huli nagpakamatay kasama
 Ang kaniyang confidente cum beautician para maganda pa rin daw siya sa sandaang taon

*Unang gantimpala, Santelmo Pambasang Hamon sa Pagtula 2024

NOTES FOR A SHORT MTV ON JOSE "PEMPE" PADILLA JR., FORMER MATINEE IDOL

"I always wanted to make a movie on Jose Padilla Jr."

Lino Brocka

Play ragtime as the credits roll
Slowed and accompanied by a church choir
Filmed behind the altar. Zoom in on that boy
On the front pew throwing the petals

Back to the flower girl, then the altar boy
Drinking the mass wine during the homily. Close up
On the bridegroom, fumbling with his words.
Kisses at the start always foretell tragedy.

His chest is bared now, glistened with oil
Then slowly pan down to his left leg clutched
By his wife or her double. She is washing
His foot with her tears. His face tightened

With rage. He yells out chiseled words.
Dub that with The Mystery Singer serenade.
Soprano blends as he drags her with his foot.
As he raises his hand, his trousers fall like Chaplin.

Cymbals as we switch to another scene.
A boxing match and with the arm's same motion,
He punches out the Japanese champion.
The anthem jazzed up as the belt was put on.

A role reversal done with shadows:
Hogtied and kicked by a Japanese soldier.
Crescendo as the flag is being raised
Juxtaposed with the pinning of the medals.

Insert favorite falling-out fillers
Superimposed with a large daily calendar
With dates rapidly blown off. Stop at 1976.
Any Manila street emptied except for him.

Older now but he seems happy.
Emote disbelief from the crowd watching
Which spilled out, moving jerkily in silent
Film fashion as he moved on in his speed

As he enters a second-run movie house
Which is showing one of his films.
As the movie ends, he rises blocking the light
The closing credits reflected on his back.



Frank Cimatú

is based in Baguio City and
writes for Rappler, among
other media.

marilou
diaz
abaya

1 PLUS 1 EQUALS 3

ricky
lee

Double Talk
Memoirs

Ilang linggo bago siya namatay sa breast cancer noong 8 Oktubre 2012, mula Enero hanggang Setyembre ay gumawa sina Marilou Diaz Abaya at Ricardo "Ricky" Lee, parehong National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts, ng series of taped conversations. Balak sana nila itong ilabas bilang some sort of a double-talk memoirs, na pamamagatang 1 plus 1 equals 3.

Nilalaman ng excerpts sa ibaba ang talakayan nila tungkol sa tatlong pelikula nilang premiyado sa Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF): *Brutal* (1981), *Moral* (1982), at *Karnal* (1984).

(Upang maging mas malinaw, bahagyang inayos ang ilang bahagi ng pag-uusap)



MARILOU DIAZ ABAYA (MDA): Several things were floating in my mind, mainly about my condition, na nag-improve nang nag-improve sa halip na mag-degenerate, which was medically expected. I was ready with the progress of my cancer, which started in the breast and is now Stage 4, meaning I'm terminal. So, matagal ko nang inisip din 'yung... anong iiwan ko? I've been teaching for so long, so is there anything else that I can leave, not only for my family, but for my students and for the Philippine audiences? Hindi ko din inaasahang magha-Happy New Year pa ako. This year, akala nila wala na ako by now. But it's 2012, and so, Happy New Year! Ah, that's three decades of journeying with Ricky as a storyteller!

MARILOU DIAZ-ABAYA (MDA): We were the dark horse because we had no big star. Truly, it was an independent film because Jesse Ejercito was sourcing funds, not only from Bancom but also from individual investors.

RICKY LEE (RL): At ang structure natin, not mainstream, not conventional, not the classical way. Ang subject natin, feminist na, at the time when...

MDA: Action films 'yung dominant. Sa MMFF, e anim na pelikula lang ang puwedeng sumali noon. So, taken for granted na ang *Panday* ang Number 1, which it was on the first day. They did not expect na, 'yung *Brutal*, by word-of-mouth, tumaas nang tumaas 'yung box-office niya hanggang nalampasan niya 'yung *Panday*. We became Number 1. Lalo na noong pagkatapos ng awards night. December 25, showing tayo, Number 7 tayo. Then naging Number 5 tayo. Then, naging Number 4. By the time lumabas lahat ng awards, almost all of which we garnered, wala na, Number 1 na tayo by December 28, 29, 30. Everybody was surprised and at the time bumilib lalo kay Jesse.

RL: I think part ng reason kaya siya nag-click sa masa was the transgression. Parang sanay na sila na nakakapanood ng nakakahon. Suddenly mayroong hindi nakakahon, ang formula niya instead ay 1+1=3. Ang dami niyang areas na pinuntahan hindi usually napupuntahan. I mean, modesty aside, sa trabaho natin.

MDA: Modesty aside, yes. Why? The whole country was in the kahon. Martial Law pa tayo no'n, Ricky. It was very dangerous to make films, so, you know, remember what happened? December 24, parade... parada. Ayaw tayong bigyan ng permit ng... hindi pa MTRCB ang tawag doon e, basta 'yung censors, mostly militar...

RL: Board of Censors yata 'yon...

MDA: Board of Censors ang tawag noon. Military. So, biglang dumating si Armida Siguion-Reyna (Line Producer) sa bahay ko. Hoy, magbihis ka. Pupunta tayo sa militar! Ha? sabi kong gano'n. Magbihis ka, we're in trouble. Ayaw tayong bigyan ng permit. Kasi daw, drugs. Hindi dahil sa violence, kundi dahil sa drugs, okay? So, mabilis akong nagbihis. Pumunta kami sa Camp Aguinaldo. Ang daming military... nakaupo lang kaming dalawa. Pero from the moment that we entered that room, Armida was in charge. Sa totoo lang, e pinapadepensa sa akin kung bakit kailangan...

RL: 'Yung drugs.

MDA: 'Yung drugs. E, ang dami nilang cuts na gustong gawin. So i had to defend it, material-wise, na may redemption sa huli, that there was no intention to...

RL: Glorify the use of drugs.

MDA: To glorify, or to malign the government. Chos! Kasi, actually, ang hindi nila nakita na mas dangerous is the chauvinism, which was parallel to the chauvinism of the regime.



RL: That was connected to the use of drugs ni Jay Ilagan (Jay), 'yung falsely-empowered na kamachohan ni Jay.

MDA: Correct, at ang hindi nila nakita, Ricky, 'yung pagkimkim at catatonia ni Amy is the catatonia of the bayan.

RL: Yeah, 'yung na-silence siya. A, nagawa n'yo lahat ito sa akin, nabiktima n'yo ako, na-oppress n'yo ako, na-suppress n'yo ako, I'll keep quiet. I-trial n'yo ang bawat isa sa inyo, lahat kayo, tingnan n'yo lahat ng mga kasalanan n'yo! I'll just keep quiet. Kayo ang mag-imbestiga sa sarili n'yo.

MDA: Yes, it was actually politically subversive. But the censors didn't see anything beyond the drugs. So nagngangalang ngayon si Armida... *"Tingnan n'yo siya (itinuturo si Marilou). Buntis siya."* Kung anong pinagdadrama ni Armida Lumuhod pa yata. Parang awa n'yo na, ganito, ganiyan. *"Can you at least make some cuts so that we can say na may cuts?"* Sabi ng Censors. *"Opo, opo, payag kami!"* Kinurot ako ni Armida sa likod na huwag na akong sumagot kasi she knows what she is doing. Sa madaling salita, o sige, sige, sige na. I think they just wanted to get rid of a crying lady na naghi-hysteria doon. E, kapatid niya si Johnny Ponce Enrile ano, who was the Minister of Defense. Tapos, pagbalik namin sa kotse, e di nagre-retouch na siya ng make-up, sabi niya sa aking gano'n, hindi naman ako nag-over, ano?



MDA: Andoon tayo sa Jack's (Restaurant), nagse-celebrate si Jesse because *Brutal* did very, very well, so sabi ni Jesse, naturally sa akin nakatingin. *"Anong follow-up natin, Marilou?"* Ako naman, *"Ricky, anong follow-up natin?"* Tapos dumating si Douglas Quijano (Talent Manager and Friend). *"Hi, congrats, congrats! O, ang susunod n'yo, ang title dapat ending with AL din ha? Dahil box office ang Brutal."* Koral, Imoral, Moral, o Moral daw ang title natin, sabi ko.

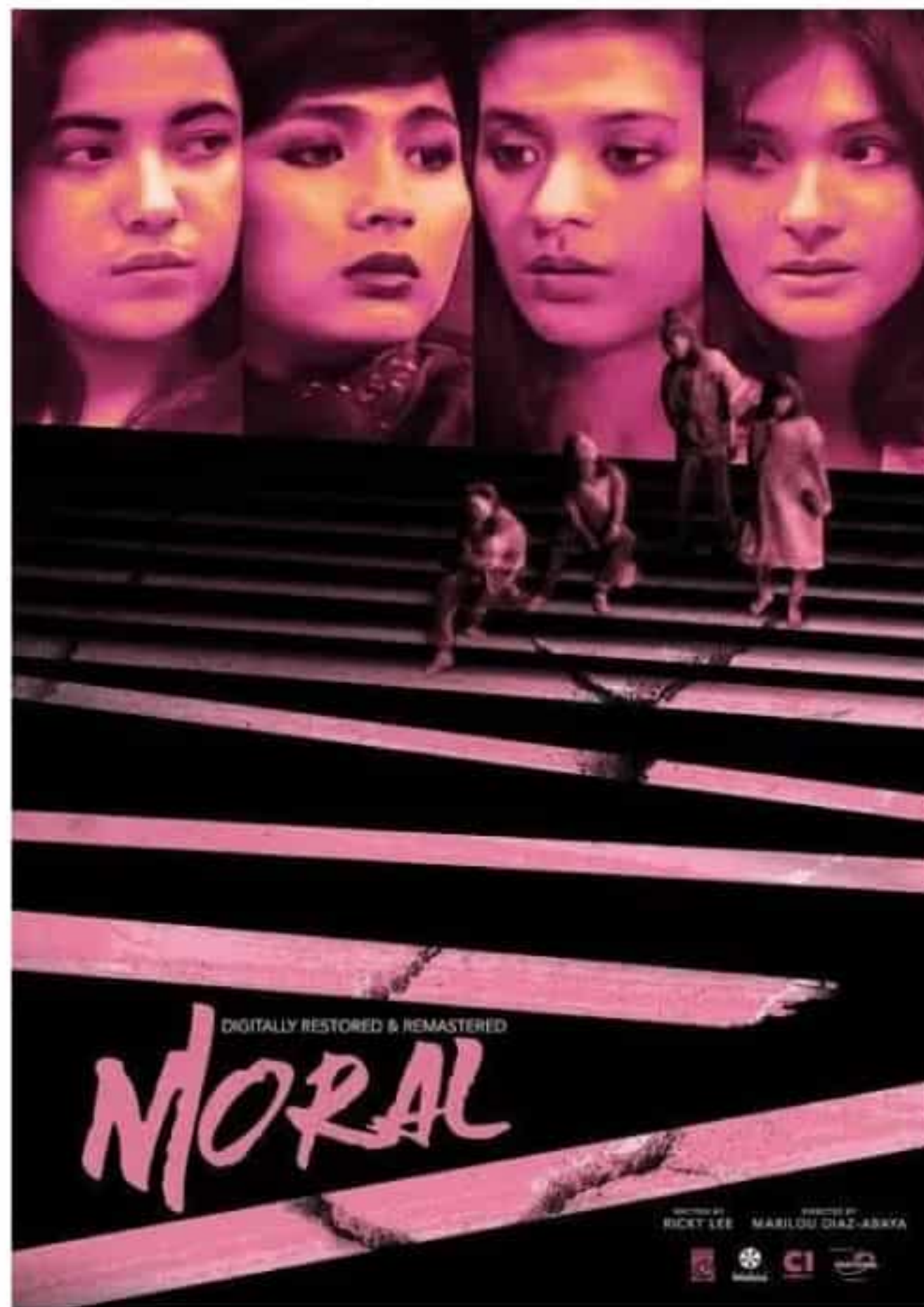
RL: So, Moral it was.

MDA: They wanted a follow-up with Amy and Gina.

RL: Kuwento ng dalawang magkaibigang gustong maging singer. Isang may boses at isang wala. Ang nagtagumpay ay 'yung walang boses at 'yung may boses ang hindi.

MDA: Korek. Doon nagsimula iyon. Pero shortly after that, e hindi na puwede si Amy. E, di parang hindi kami makahanap ni Ricky ng anumang itutumbas kay Gina na may Amy. Sa kaalisip namin, e may naisip si Ricky, mga ibang problema ng babae na ganito, ganoon, na hindi na puwedeng pagkasyahin sa dalawang character. Pati si Douglas din nag-input habang nandoon kami sa Jack's na hindi naman kami umiinom ni Ricky. Coke kami nang Coke, buti nga wala kaming diabetes. *"O, ano isali n'yo diyan si Lorna,"* sabi ni Jesse. So, noong isinusulat ni Ricky conscious na kami na we had a Lorna. We had a Gina. Sabi ni Papa Jesse, *"Kumuha tayo noong hindi masyadong star pero magaling umarte."* Kaya napasok sina Sandy (Andolong) at Anna (Marin).

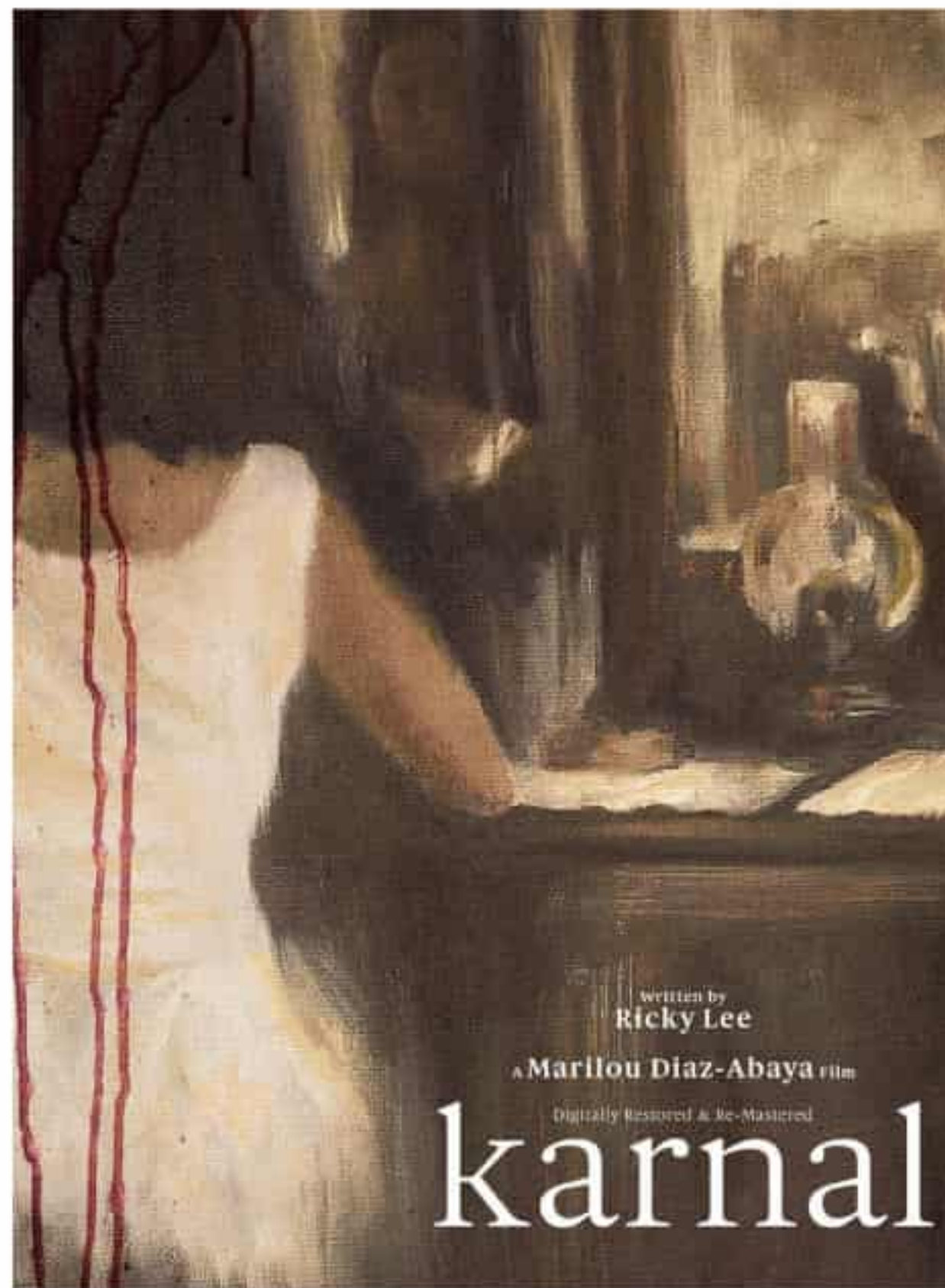
ON MORAL



MDA: Ang unang komento ni Ishmael Bernal (Ishma) matapos mabasa ang script ng *Moral*— “Hahahahaha! Baligtad! Ikaw, Marilou, ang madre, ikaw ang dapat gumawa ng Himala! Tapos ako, ako yung bad girl, so dapat ako ‘yung gumagawa ng Moral!” (Laking kumbento kasi Marilou, samantalang si Ishma ay galing sa UP) Now, sabi ni Ishma, being that as it may, I will spend a few hours with you hoping that you would educate me in the theology of miracles. It is called phenomenology. Hindi puwedeng title ‘yon. All this time si Ricky nakatingin sa amin. Can you imagine Ricky having to go back and forth between me and Ishma? Di ko talaga alam kung bakit di siya naloka sa aming dalawa. So ngayon, tinuturuan ko si Ishma ng certain doctrines, dogma, phenomenology, how the church is careful about that, and that in the final analysis, miracles happen only in the heart and the imagination. So gustong-gusto niya ‘yon, Kaya sabi niya, now, I shall teach you naman about the culture of UP (University of the Philippines). The first thing you have to learn is to smoke marijuana. Binigyan niya ako ng... nagla-light siya ng stick ng marijuana para patikman lang daw sa akin. Aba, e hinihika-hika na ako, nahilo-hilo na ako, so sabi niya, “You’re a failure, you’re a total failure! You should just wait till I’m ready to direct *Moral* and act in it!” He wanted to portray Mrs. Torres, kayang-kaya daw niya ‘yuni!

RL: You were also commenting on each other’s works.

MDA: Magkatabing room kami sa Magnatech. Ipapakita niya sa akin ‘yung Himala. Comment-comment ako. Titingnan niya ‘yung Moral. Comment-comment siya. Si Anna Marin, di marunong mag-marijuana, tingnan mo ‘yung mga daliri, nakabukang gand’n. In the meantime, ako naman comment-comment ulit sa Himala. So, it went on and on that way. And because Himala was, I know, a very-very challenging, I mean, spiritually challenging subject for Ishma, he was living it. He was thinking it all day, all night, that for sure he was even thinking that it might be his last film. What will make him think that? I don’t know, but surely he thinks it might be his last film, so he better try his best. I don’t know where he was coming from then. Inisip niya lagi na ikamamatay niya ‘yon sa laki ng production. Nakaka-intimidate, e. It’s very-very overwhelming, sabi niya, “How to present such a phenomenon without talking down on my audience but just really showing an event that is not exclusive to the area.” I knew that it was deeply important for him spiritually. Marami siyang questions. Marami siyang experiments in his mind on how to treat it, and so on, and so forth, but I think above all, he never lost compassion in the film. He was always worrying about it, so what does this photographer really feel? What does Nora feel? Does she feel anything? Has she become a robot? He was trying to investigate and probe the person behind every character, which is not unusual for Ishma but it was particularly intense for Himala.



MDA: Kinontak ako ni Ben Yalung, "Let's have lunch. I'd like to work with you. I plan to launch *Cecille Castillo* in a festival movie." Tapos may nabanggit siya, in the course of the lunch, na may nabasa siya sa magazine...

RL: May isang guy, dinala niya sa hometown niya ang kaniyang wife, na modern na modern.

Napagselosan niya 'yung tatay at napatay niya. Kaya kailangan niyang libot ang kabaong ng tatay all over the town as a ritual.

MDA: 'Yun lang ang given ni Yalung. So, kami na ni Ricky ang nag-Imagine na, hindi na ito masyadong problema ngayon kasi, puro crime din ang nasa news. 1983, kaka-assassinate lang kay Benigno Aquino. Parang malabnaw 'yung problema ng patricide at this time, considering 'yung conditions. Kaya nagdesisyon kami na ang *Karnal* ay magiging 1930s, but told from the point of view of 1984, where tensiyonado na 'yung buong bayan dahil pinaslang na si Ninoy. Hindi natin alam anytime kung magkakarebolusyon ba? Kailan tayo aalma, aalsa? It's like the tension of Phillip Salvador in *Karnal*. Ito, bibigay itong si Phillip, from the beginning pa lang, alam mo na, tensiyonado, e. At saka the taong bayan there in *Karnal*.

were so cynical also from the beginning pa lang. Ganoon din tayo noon, after Aquino was assassinated, many of us were cynical.

RL: 'Yung hindi cynical na character sa *Karnal* pero walang voice ay si Joel Torre. 'Yung pipi. Walang boses, so Lyon ang representation ng society that time. With Vic Silayan as the...

MDA: Patriarch, dictator...

RL: Na ide-decapitate.

MDA: Na na-decapitate.

Itutuloy.

Mababasa ang susunod na parte sa binubuo pang Double Talk Memoirs ng dalawang Pambansang Alagad ng Sining sa Pelikula at Sining Broadcast: Ricardo Lee at Mariou Diaz-Abaya.

The Eddie Romero Centenary

—A RECAPITULATION OF EVENTS

S ometime in the year 2013, National Artist for Film Gerardo "Gerry" de Leon was honored with a celebration of his centennial year. His movies were shown in the CCP and there was a gala dinner which I attended with my late mother, Carol, and my wife, Vivian. My father Eddie Romero had just passed away earlier in that same year. Manong Gerry, as he was fondly called, was a close friend of my father's, who considered him as his 'mentor.' During that gala dinner for Manong Gerry, I was told by some officer from CCP or NCCA that my father would be accorded the same honor/s on his 100th birthday. I said, "that would be 2024, eleven years from now." It seemed to be a long time, coming from then.

Well, time flies, so they say. Came 2024, my father's centenary year. I began to wonder if there was anything in store for him. On Jan. 18, I received a Facebook message from NCCA asking me who they can coordinate with me regarding a bust of National Artist Eddie Romero, which they would like to donate in celebration of his birth centennial. I said that would be me. That's when I started coordinating with Lou Isabelle Danganan from the Order of National Artists Awards office. She provided me with more information on the bust. They had commissioned sculptor Fred Caedo to do it. She said she would inform me if work was already underway.

In the meantime, I received a call from Onat Rios of SOFIA (Society of Filipino Film Archivists). They planned to show one film of Eddie Romero's each month at different venues beginning in April. They were able to get the support of the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP). They knew where to avail of restored versions of *Ganito Kami Noon* and *Aguila* but were still looking for sources of his other films, particularly *Kamakalawa* and *Hari Sa Hari*.

The month of March had set in. I had a conversation with Rica Arevalo of the

FDCP (Film Development Council of the Philippines). Rica, who had worked as script-writer in two of my father's last movies, suggested that I submit a project proposal to the FDCP, which was then under Chairman Tirso Cruz III, for honoring Eddie Romero during his centennial. I said I would like to see a documentary on his life and works. Rica said "okay, work on your proposal." Out of delicadeza, I decided not to do the documentary myself, but to commission a good documentary filmmaker. I got in touch with Baby Ruth Villarama, whose "Sunday Beauty Queen" impressed me, not to mention the awards it won.

At this time, sculptor Fred Caedo had already begun work on the bust. We touched base. He said he could use some help and asked if I could drop by his shop in Blumentritt, Sampaloc to guide him in making the image resemble my dad as closely as possible.

Before we could submit our proposal to FDCP, Chairman Tirso Cruz III surprised everyone with his sudden resignation "for personal reasons."

The vacancy created by Mr. Cruz in the chairmanship of FDCP was filled with the appointment of Director Jose Javier

Reyes. Direk Joey Reyes replied to my congratulatory message with a "thank you and let's work on your father's centennial." I immediately advised Baby Ruth Villarama to prepare the synopsis and budget for our documentary project proposal.

April came. As planned, SOFIA was able to screen its first "Eddie Romero @ 100" (the name they coined for their project) movie, *Aguila* at the GSIS theater. Brian Poe Llamanzares, son of Senator Grace Poe, represented his mother and introduced the film.

I had been visiting Fred Caedo's studio to suggest tweaks here and there on the clay figure of my father's head. It was around that time that NCCA informed me that, traditionally, they would bring the bust of the National Artist to his place of birth for unveiling on his date of birth. So that meant unveiling in Dumaguete City on July 7, 2024. NCCA's Lou Danganan, or Elle as she preferred to be called, asked me if I knew anyone from the local government they could coordinate with for the unveiling. I said, "I'll try."

I called up Mayor Felipe Remollo. To my surprise, the good mayor was very accommodating. He said, "come over and choose a spot, wherever you want the bust installed." He even suggested placing it in the new museum he had built right beside the city hall, or in Silliman University, where my father's memorabilia has been on display in the library since my mother and I donated them in 2017.





I asked the mayor if it was possible to do this on the boulevard, since I thought it would be best to have it in the open, accessible to the public, and the boulevard was my father's favorite place in Dumaguete. The mayor replied with this: "Joey, that is Rizal Boulevard. Soon there will be a statue of Rizal installed there on the very place he set foot on a stop-over here while he was being transported from Dapitan back to Manila before his execution. So let us give that to Rizal, don't you think?" I totally agreed. "But I have a perfect place I'd like you to see," he continued.

That paved the way for an ocular inspection with NCCA personnel of Dumaguete. Talks were also initiated with Silliman University and Foundation University for screenings and lectures.

Came May. SOFIA screened *Ganito Kami Nuon*, *Paano Kayo Ngayon?* at

the UP Film Center. I sat for the Talk-back with actors Jimmy Fabregas and Dranreb, along with ABS-CBN's Sagip Pelikula head, Leo Katigbak.

Towards the latter part of May, Sen. Grace Poe filed a Senate resolution honoring Eddie Romero "for his notable contributions to Philippine Cinema and the Arts."

June got busier, since preparations were accelerating as the big event's date was getting closer. Earlier that month, the 47th Urian Awards was dedicated to Eddie Romero, its first honoree 47 years ago. Shortly after the Urian event, the documentary project was green-lighted by FDCP. Direk Baby declared unveiling day July 7 as Day One for filming. SOFIA was able to get a copy of *Kamakalawa* for screening in PUP. Fred Caedo and I finalized the bust for casting into bronze before transport to Dumaguete. Elle and her NCCA



staff came in closer contact with the city's tourism office, personnel from Silliman and Foundation for the three-day event that was to take place from July 5-7. I followed up on invitations I had sent out to family and friends to attend the ceremonies.

My wife and I arrived in Dumaguete on July 4. Pre-unveiling activities started on July 5 with the screening of *Ganito Kami Nuon* at the Luce Auditorium in Silliman University. In the same venue, *Kamakalawa* was shown the next day to an avid crowd of students and film buffs. That was followed by another screening in Pantawan People's Park. This time it was the 3½ hour movie *Aguila* which drew a slew of park strollers curious to see action king FPJ leading a huge cast of characters.

The big day came. July 7. Ceremony was scheduled to start at 5:00 p.m. People in Filipiniana attire started filling up

the newly refurbished lawn in front of the new museum by the city hall. It started promptly. Cameras rolled and clicked, drones buzzed. Mayor Remollo opened and welcomed a crowd composed mostly of relatives and friends. I delivered a keynote address.

The mayor, sculptor Fred Caedo and I led the unveiling. After photo ops around the bronze bust of Eddie Romero, Mayor Remollo led us on a short walk towards the new museum where my father's memorabilia, on loan from Silliman University, was on display. The long day was capped by a reception at the mayor's house.

While this was all happening, a group of visual artists called ArtVII called to invite me to an exhibit which they were going to hold in honor of Eddie Romero. I asked politely what the connection was between them, a group of visual



Joey Romero

is the son of National Artist Eddie Romero, and is also a respected director in the Philippine entertainment industry.

artists and my father, a filmmaker. They said their works that would be on exhibit take inspiration from his films, and what better time to honor him than on his centennial year and month?

That caught my fancy. I gladly accepted the invitation. It was held in Galerie du Soleil, Taguig on July 13. Gloria Diaz and writer Frank Rivera were also in attendance.

I had long planned to take a break after all the festivities with a trip to Europe, where two of my sons and their families are based. My wife and I left on July 15, and we were scheduled to return on Sept. 3.

While away, I received an email from FDCP. It was an invitation for the opening of 'Philippine Film Industry Month' as they had declared September to be. *Aguila* was scheduled to be the opening film at the Metropolitan Theater on Sept. 1. I felt so touched that recognition of Dad's work continued to come in. Since I was still abroad, I sent my son and daughter-in-law to represent the family.

Fortunately, I was on hand to attend the gala night of the month-long celebration on Sept. 13. Eleven National Artists for Film were honored in the program held at Teatrino in Greenhills.

If I at first wondered what was in store for my father on his centenary, I couldn't be more thankful today for all the accolades he has received and continues to receive. The documentary film is expected to be ready for screening in late November or early December. A book on the screenplay of *Ganito Kami Nuon, Paano Kayo Ngayon?* will also be published through the auspices of NCCA before the end of the year.

I'm sure my father is smiling down at us from up there. A lot has changed. Filmmaking continues to evolve. Nonetheless, present and future filmmakers may draw inspiration from the trail he has blazed.



A heart attack, a flight to Honolulu that killed my father, and an expensive bomb

[Excerpted from a collection of memoiric essays by Lore Reyes on the three decades of the Gallaga-Reyes filmmaking tandem.]

LORE REYES

On the set of "Sa Piling ng Asawang", Megal Films 1999. Mambuhai Falls, Murcia, Negros Occidental.



Both pics are from a September 2015 feature in *BusinessWorld*, written by Paul Daza; Photography Johann Bona & Jed Root

In December 1984, after a week of discordant dress-tech rehearsals for a Kuh Ledesma concert, and just a few hours after an all-day runthrough of a Tessie Tomas dinner-theater comedy, Peque Gallaga had a massive heart attack. A mere five weeks later, after leaving the hospital against medical advice, he slogged through 13 straight days of shooting what was to become the erotic classic *Scorpio Nights*. The month-long shoot of *Unfaithful Wife* in Cubao and in Lucban, Quezon followed shortly afterwards.

Visibly enfeebled by the attack, Peque paid no heed to the physical and emotional stress of shooting and persisted in working at his usual pace. But when

a big-budget film starring Dolphy came up on the horizon, Peque began seriously entertaining the notion of sharing the load with a directing partner.

Peque had asked two colleagues before he asked me: screenwriter Uro de la Cruz, and designer Don Escudero, in that order. For their own reasons, both declined.

When finally Peque came to me with the offer, I readily accepted. Privately, I was scared. The highlight of my scant forays into the performing arts in college was that I had written the book and lyrics for the agit-prop musical *Barikada*, which was staged at the UP Theater at the height of the

First Quarter Storm. Up until Peque's shocker of a proposition, the sum of my filmmaking experience consisted in being Production Manager in an Imee Marcos-produced film, and in three of Peque's. Early on, I recognized that I had a predilection for post-production work. I am simply fascinated by film editing, and dialogue replacement, and Foley, and musical scoring, and sound mixing, and color grading—all the viscera of the post-shooting finishing process. If I were to prophesy then what I would end up doing in future, I would have guessed film editor. Directing films was furthest from my mind.

I was fully cognizant that I did not have the dramaturgy that both Uro and

Don possessed, and I did bring this up with Peque, at the outset. Peque maintained that it was my approach to problem-solving, my thought processes, and my facility for tough street Tagalog that interested him—more than any pertinent skill set I might have.

It was the tail end of the summer of 1985. Production money had been released, the humongous sets were being built, and we had obtained calendar reservations from our two most in-demand actors, Dolphy and Gloria Romero. We were all set to go, except the sequence treatment came in awfully late. And shoddy. The "script" was an unwieldy jumble, a thick sheaf of typewritten letter-sized pieces with

Richard Gomez,
Janice de Belen
"Once Upon a Time"



smaller bits of paper pasted on, haphazardly scotch-taped or stapled onto the pages, the bundle precariously bound together by fasteners. A confusing tangle of arrows were penned all over the manuscript to help direct the reader's eye where to jump to which revision note, and where to revert back to the original passage, etc. In short, it was a mess. Uro must surely have been so seriously overextended that he simply ran out of time to do a more decent submission of the treatment.

Meanwhile, we still had to do revisions. Most of the dialogue had yet to be written. We needed scene breakdowns of the whole script for reference of the different departments. "Once Upon a Time" was the first full film script that we worked on using a computer. Providentially Peque had just acquired a computer, one of the early generations of PCs that had the CPU and keyboard and monitor integrated in one portable piece. It was heavy and unwieldy and bulky, but it did the job. We were working on floppy disks, on

Wordstar, if anybody still alive even remembers that pioneering word processing program.

This screenplay was also the first time that I wrote a significant amount of dialogue for any film. At the same time, I was translating all the dialogue that Peque was writing. Peque would write in English, and it was mortifying to find that so many concepts in English are not so handily commutable into Tagalog.

After a grievously brief pre-production period, principal photography for "Once Upon a Time" started. The first few shots that I directed were "safe" enough. In the very first scene I had Richard Gomez and Anjo Yllana, both in their teens, both still neophytes in the business. The setup was quite simple in that it was mostly dialogue, not calling for complicated blocking or action.

Having gained confidence after directing many more sequences in the



Lora Reyes
directing the
film shoot of the
Tikbalang Dance
that was used as
reference for the
clay animation
Opening Credits of
"Once Upon a Time"

following days, it was a shock to realize just how anxious I was about working with a superstar.

Previously, Peque and I had agreed which particular sequence I was going to direct solo the first time that Dolphy was on the day's call sheet. In my scene, a captive Dolphy, shackled to a wall, is being taunted by a villainous Pen Medina. I was dreading the moment. Dolphy was friendly, courteous, and deadpan funny. Even so, I was terror-stricken. I was exceedingly intimidated by Dolphy's celebrity.

Before my first major Dolphy scene,

Peque had asked if I wanted him to hang around while I directed the scene, and I said I'd rather he did not. Despite some jitters in the initial camera setups, I was fairly happy with my coverage, and believed the scene played out quite well. For all that, to this day, watching that very first full scene I ever directed still makes me cringe. Imagined or not, it always feels like my frayed nerves are on full display, documented on film. For posterity.

We started shooting *Once Upon a Time* in October of 1985. By January, we were roughly three quarters done with the Gloria Romero scenes. Then



Lore Reyes
(not a recent photo haha).

came her announcement that she had to leave for the States. Certain that we'd go way over budget if we postponed shoots, Peque hastily made major rewrites that allowed us to keep on shooting without Ms. Romero. He created a scene wherein Gloria's role, Reynang Kamkam, gets possessed by her master Bangorngor (a disembodied floating head played by Eddie "E.A." Rocha).

In the freshly minted transition sequence, a bas relief emblem of Bangorngor detaches from the castle wall and, like a death mask, latches onto

Reynang Kamkam's face. Thereafter until her return to the set months later, the Gloria Romero role was performed by Georgie Ledesma, one of the film's art directors, known for his grace of movement.

After just a brief interruption, we resumed shooting, now with a masked Georgie playing Gloria's role, delivering all of Gloria's lines behind a variety of ornate masks.

Gloria Romero's sudden unavailability, and the ensuing stopgap measures and adjustments to our shooting

calendar, had overburdened us with delays and overages. We pleaded with Mother Lily for an increase in our production budget.

In the hastily convened budget meeting, Lily Monteverde dropped another bombshell: Dolphy was demanding a raise in his talent fee — quite justly — as a condition for coming back to shoot his remaining scenes. After all, he had fulfilled his initial commitment to the film, and it wasn't his fault that we were not finished shooting the movie.

Meanwhile, revolution was in the air. Chaos reigned on the streets of Manila and in the nation's collective heart.

At the exact moment that Peque and I were pleading our case over dinner with Mother Lily at the Casa Marcos restaurant on Gilmore Avenue, just outside outraged citizens were burning rubber tires in the middle of the streets. A fast-spreading noise barrage was materializing, with car horns blasting, and pots and pans banging in a spontaneous nationwide display of civil disobedience. It had become plain that Marcos had cheated and stolen the presidency in the snap presidential elections.

It was not a good time for us to get back to the grind. The country was angry. But then we were shackled by a strict shooting calendar and production deadlines. Despite the upheaval that was happening all around us, we had no choice but to resume shooting as early as possible.

Gloria Romero.
Once Upon a Time



Theatrical Poster
of *Once Upon a Time*.

Peque on the set of
Once Upon a Time.
With Joel Torre,
Tony Mabesa.



Dolphy.
Once Upon a Time



Right then, the EDSA People's Power revolt happened.

Our improvised studio in Pasig was an erstwhile AjiNoMoto vetsin factory that we had turned into a sound stage. One late night, when we were left with one technical sequence to shoot, with no actors involved, we noticed that people were curiously huddled in groups, glued to a developing story being broadcast over the radio. Caught with their pants down after initiating a military coup, General Fidel Ramos and Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile were under mortal threat of being attacked by soldiers loyal to President Marcos. They were now holed up in a building in Camp Aguinaldo, a mere few kilometers away from our warehouse.

Initially we were not overly concerned over the seemingly alarmist news flash. We did not have proper context — we were merely getting fragments of the developing EDSA drama. Our focus was on the shoot.

But the crew's distress over the unnerving radio reports was palpable. We eventually called a hasty end to the shoot, just in case serious violence was afoot. We all hurriedly left the studio.

I was without a car at the time, my Toyota Corolla having been so rudely carjacked just a few months earlier. In the past few weeks of almost daily shooting in the Pasig studio, we had gotten into a routine where I would hitch a ride with actor Anjo Yllana during shooting days. My place in UP Village was along the way from his family's house in Fairview.

From our shooting location near Valle Verde in Pasig shortly before dawn that day, when Anjo and I got to the crossing of EDSA and Ortigas, we found civilian volunteers directing traffic at the intersection. We could see people moving in packs on their way towards the camps a mere half a kilometer or so away. Vehicles were being stopped from turning into EDSA, which we were



Promo pictorial of
"Batang X", Regal
Films 1995.

told was already impassable between Ortigas Avenue and Cubao. A rapidly swelling mass of citizens was blocking both lanes.

Anjo had no choice but to drive across EDSA and keep going straight on Ortigas. It was almost sunrise, and we decided to grab some light breakfast of goto lugaw at the 24-hour kiosk of Goodah! at the Greenhills Shopping Center.

As we were eating, Anjo got an urgent call on the army-issue UHF radio that

he always lugged around. It was a relayed message from his dad telling us to go home without delay, and warning us that all the armed services and military camps had been put on the highest alert status. As it turned out, Anjo's father, an army colonel, was active in the underground Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM). We were told to get off the streets.

At this point we were already enduring a forced slow-down in shooting, after Gloria Romero's abrupt departure. Stir-crazy with cabin fever, and itching to be somehow productive during this break caused by the volatile political climate, Peque scheduled a rewrite session.

We borrowed a friend's apartment in a condo on Roxas Boulevard where Peque and I started brainstorming possible script revisions. It was February 1986, and the mobile phone was still in the distant future. I would regularly call home to check on my parents (my father had just been discharged after a lengthy hospital confinement), and on one of those calls, we learned that friends had been calling, trying to get hold of us. We learned that June Keithley was reaching out to Peque for help of some kind.

Later that evening we arrived at the J&T Tower in Sta. Mesa where the studios of rock AM radio station DZRJ occupied the top floors, including the roof deck. June, fondly called Ketli by friends, had previously been reporting around the clock on the drama in Camp Aguinaldo, broadcasting on Radio Veritas. After the Veritas transmitters were sabotaged by state operatives, Father James Reuter, director of communication for the Jesuits in the Philippines, arranged for Ketli to

use a Jacinto-owned AM radio station. This was DZRJ: "The Rock of Manila", "Boss Radio", 830 kHz on your AM dial. I'd been an RJ fan since freshman high school.

DZRJ has now transformed into a clandestine broadcasting facility, the better to keep the Marcos jingos from bombing the station to kingdom come. The station was now identifying itself as "Radyo Bandido".

The *dramatis personae* I'm certain were there with us in Radyo Bandido that fateful night were, among others: Peque, Peque's wife Madie, his eldest son Gines, Mario Taguiwalo, Kokoy Jimenez, and Jaime Fabregas.

There was no straightforward way up to the DJ booth. One took the building elevator to its highest floor destination, then climbed a flight of normal stairs, and finally a narrow set of spiral stairs before one reached the broadcast area. This "penthouse" booth was completely paneled all around with clear glass, with a stunning 360-degree panorama of the city, the Sierra Madre range to the east and Manila Bay to the west. First thing we did when we got there was cover the wraparound glass windows completely with many layers of old newspaper, just in case a loyalist helicopter comes looking and spots us in that transparent broadcast booth. Remember, the Marcos armed forces were frantically trying to locate where Radyo Bandido was broadcasting from.

Nuns were seated on the steps, partially blocking the stairs. Father Reuters' guardian angels, we presumed, praying for our souls.



In the booth, June was with two teens (the two were brothers, both from Ateneo, the younger one being Gabe Mercado who went on to be a standup, actor, and director). The kids were carryovers from June's previous ill-fated Radio Veritas broadcast, where they were helping verify the flood of conflicting reports and rumors. We in Peque's group started flagging calls and helping with fact-checking and authenticating as best we can the deluge of information, some of which sounded absolutely fantastical.

In the early morning of February 24, June Keithley announced—prema-

On the set of *Magic Kingdom*, Viva Films 1997.

Clockwise (From upper left)

Lore Reyes, Junell Hernandez, Peque Gallaga, Anne Curtis, Jason Salcedo, Janus del Prado, Jomari Uy.

turely, as it would turn out—that Ver and Marcos and his family had fled the country. Subsequently would follow Enrile and Ramos's triumphant address to the ecstatic crowd outside Camp Crame; Ramos's famous jump on the PC-INP headquarters; and a wild cascade of defections by loyalist soldiers who were deserting the Marcos camp.

A heady national wave of euphoria that was to end abruptly when, later that day, Marcos, his family and his generals appeared on television to show that they had not fled.

But the fate of the Marcoses was sealed. Before midnight of the following day, it was confirmed that they had indeed hotfooted it to Hawaii in arrangements facilitated by the US government.

Meanwhile, on my home front, there was disquiet as well. Bedridden for months with an illness that had been lingering for years, my beloved father—a true Genuine Ilocano who worshiped President Marcos and believed him our country's savior—passed away in our UP Village residence, on Black Saturday of that year's Lent season, just a few days after the ignominious departure of the Marcoses. To this day, I truly believe that the deposed president's disgraceful exit hastened my father's decline and eventual demise.

Barely a month after our new president, Cory Cojuangco Aquino, was sworn in at the Club Filipino in Greenhills, we resumed shooting.



We had chosen the Benguet Mining's chromite mines in Masinloc, Zambales as our main location for the ethereal exteriors that we needed for the Tikbalang world in the film. As expected, Dolphy got his talent fee hike and was promptly back on the set, laid back and buoyant and professional as ever. The unearthly location we picked for the major battle scenes consisted of monumental mounds of tailings, by-products of the mining operations. The metallic sand was baking hot from being under the sun all day long. Dolphy, along with the stranded earthlings (Richard Gomez, Anjo Yllana, Chuckle Drayfus), valiantly withstood the aggravation brought on by the fine chromite ore that would cause painful burns when the hot granules would time and again get into their clothes or footwear.

We returned to the Pasig studio just in time for Gloria Romero's arrival from



Lore Reyes

is a Filipino screenwriter, producer, songwriter, and director for film and television. His most renowned work includes *Magic Temple*, *Batang X*, and three complete trilogies in the *Shake Rattle & Roll* franchise. He co-directed 30 feature films in a 32-year partnership with Peque Gallaga, and directed 14 teleseryes for GMA Entertainment.

abroad. After shooting her handful of remaining scenes, we were still left with a major exterior scene which we shot in Boso-Boso, Antipolo, plus some leftover special effects shots. Shooting finally wrapped just before the monsoon rains came in June 1986.

Despite the drama, notwithstanding the snags, *Once Upon a Time* stout-heartedly pulled through the disarray of a people-powered revolt. But sadly, upon completion, the film would wither under the onslaught of the countless coup attempts against the Cory presidency.

Despite Peque's pleas, Regal Films matriarch Mother Lily, fearing a box office disaster in the midst of the bombings, the military adventurism of the Enrile camp, and the prevailing political instability, just kept postponing and rescheduling then postponing again the theatrical release of the film. We kept reminding Mother Lily that the film's trailer had been running in theaters and on television for almost six months already, so much so that it now reeked of the stinky redolence of an old movie.

"Amoy baul na ang pelikula," as one would say of some dated object that has lost its immediacy and become passé.

Once Upon a Time, the first ever Gallaga-Reyes opus, finally screened in multiple theaters on January 4, 1987. Nobody went to see it. My storied three-decade directing collaboration with Peque began with our most expensive bomb.

Peque and I had been friends and colleagues for nearly a decade before we were directing partners. He was my boss for more than four of those years. One of the most frequently asked questions in student and press forums was how Peque and I managed to sustain our partnership all through those thirty-odd years of helming films together, given the impossible pressures and complexities of the eternally tough world of filmmaking.

There is one abiding challenge that overshadowed all others: our handling of creative differences. In private we fought furiously for our own views. But this was as far as internal resolution of conflicts was concerned. The more consequential difficulty is in the optics: the outward handling of the inevitable disagreements.

It's impossible to determine exactly at what juncture we found a comfortable modus. Blessedly, we did, at some point. The aspiration was to present a solid front, whenever possible, in our handling of the occasional contretemps, and in our resulting interaction with our collaborators: actors, staff, crew. There is nothing worse than having two bickering generals in command of troops locked in bloody battle. Achieving such a united front required a lot of give and take, understanding, generosity and kindness.

CHARACTER SKETCH:

Amado L. Lacuesta, Jr.

For five years now I've been able to think about my father like he was younger than me. That's because he died at forty-nine. Impossibly young, they all said when it happened, but now suddenly plausible to me as a man in his well into his fifties.

This also means that I am literally unable to see him as an elder presence anymore. He's an abstract presence now. There are only two or three photos of him on the Internet.

But I find that my father has always around me, for better or for worse, as a man of various faces and persuasions and contexts: a character in my novel, a voice in my head, a personality of his generation, endowed with

so much to live for and to fight for. This refracts his image even more and makes him even more abstract, as though he was a shadow or a touch, a psychological imprint that, almost thirty years after his death, has only its fingerprints in the air.

But often, when I am at work on something, he comes to me as a real person, but younger than his age at death. He comes to me in the prime, and the primary turning point, of his brief existence: Daddy is 35 years old and he's just been to the star-studded premiere of *Working Girls*, a film he has written for Ishmael Bernal and come to sudden large life on multiple silver screens. By this time he's made other leaps and bounds in his career as an investment banker.



ANGELO R. LACUESTA

But again, he was of that particular generation, nourished on the paradoxes of the zeitgeist, itself nourished by a government that encouraged all kinds of compromises. My father, whom I still call Daddy even though he is younger than me now, turned a bit left instead of right, or went straight through anyway, without thinking of the consequences, and chose what the previously level-headed company man in him (and his more straightlaced peers) might have called "a life of crime." And like any criminal helplessly dedicated to their criminal persuasions, he picked his new line of work and stuck to it, as if it was part of his duty to reject even the practical compromises of a balanced life and outlook.

It was hardly a victimless crime, too. There were four of us to bring home bacon to, five if you count the milk and diapers for my one year old sister to live on. Maybe he forgot about that part, so I'll call it a case of lingering afterglow after making the true breakthrough in the sex comedy genre that I consider *Working Girls* to be. I'm saying this in complete objectivity because I wasn't present at that premiere—I was too young to be allowed into the theater. I only really saw it again, in all its fullness and singularity, long after his death and the death of Ishmael Bernal, long after the many frustrating and often bewildering changes it made in our family life.

But maybe he forgot the part where he was a banker, too. You see, for a regular screenwriter, there is no big jackpot down the road where your stock suddenly goes big or your parent company goes IPO. There are no dividends, no honoraria at board meetings, no secre-

taries and no expense accounts. I can find no explanation for that. My father, without compromise, without looking back, chose to be a writer for film.

The first movie he ever took me to, as far as I remember, is *Jesus Christ Superstar*. And then it was *Jaws* and *The Towering Inferno*. There were also *Cannonball* and *The Bad New Bears*, all of the Herbie movies with that silly Volkswagen and *One on One* with Robbie Benson. It was not some kind of odyssey into the world of cinema. It was just father-and-son-on-a-day-out stuff—even and especially *Jesus Christ Superstar*, especially to Catholic-educated me, because it was literally about the Son of God.

I don't remember him taking me to see a Filipino movie. I don't think he actively sought them out. As far as I can remember, I don't think he really saw cinema as a source for his stories and his screenplays. I remember him bringing home our first Betamax player along with the two tapes he had chosen to christen it with, and for us to watch on an endless loop: *The Empire Strikes Back* and *The Muppet Show*. Not a sign of Renoir or Truffaut or even Woody Allen, whose wit I knew he loved whenever he had the odd and unplanned chance to see him in movies.

I am convinced that my father's source of his narratives were the most natural and the most unforgiving—his own life and the lives of those around him.

By that time he had gone through most of the sturm und drang of mid-career and mid-marriage. He had had his fill of cocktails and art gallery openings and

haircuts on the company membership dime at the Makati Sports Club. Mid-life crisis was still years away. At the swell of his second career, he went on nights out with Marilou Diaz-Abaya and friends to the King Kong Bar, or to Kape Talismo where Jimmy Fabregas played folk on some nights and the café currency was in the form of chits designed by Santi Bose. While doing research work on scripts for *Balweg: The Rebel Priest* (dir. Butch Perez), *Hinugot sa Langit* (dir. Ishmael Bernal), *Segurista* (dir. Tikoy Aguiluz), and the TV show *Sic o Clock News* (dir. Marilou Diaz-Abaya), he must have found himself among his kind. He had slowly returned to his old bohemian ways, and had found enough purchase to stay comfortably in place. So did the rest of his family, of course, eventually, turning his Quezon City bungalow into mess of books, art, and all sorts of interesting people.

For me, that bungalow quickly expanded into a weird world, which he introduced me to at an age both too tender, and thus too impressionable, as he had done even when I was a young child. Where I once sat just outside his office, sitting in the laps of secretaries who spoiled me with an endless supply of drawing paper and felt-tip markers from the corporate stock room, I found myself being gingerly patted on the head by filmmakers and artists who never knew how to deal with a thirteen-year old boy. I was his chaperone, his faithful minder, or at times, maybe his only fan.

Today I have made it clear to myself that I will always be older than him from now on, also because I am horrified by how it would break my heart to imagine him still alive, still a father to me at

almost eighty years old. So I remind myself that at my age, maybe I can finally show him a thing or two. Or can I?

I guess I can teach him how to watch his blood pressure and eat better. But other than that, nothing much. Certainly nothing about how to do it the way he did it, how to write plots and characters and how to build conflict and story arcs, and how how he could think them all through in one night, just by kicking his slipper around in the living room, and come up with something by morning.

"How do you do it, Daddy?"

He doesn't say anything.

"Why can't I do it like you do it?"

"Because you're making it about you all the time," the page answers, out of nowhere. I'm reminded of the night I shouted "it speaks!" when he finally uttered something in the middle of a very quiet family meal where he did nothing but scowl and grunt about a script he was writing.

But that was him speaking, too, the way he looked at the middle distance or looked blankly at the TV by his computer and imagined things happening in whatever he'd been writing. He was thinking of what happened to real people. What he was interested in and concerned about most was the lives of others. Those were his libraries, his theaters, the great tap roots of his stories. He taught it to me by taking me to his meetings and his cocktail parties, to his twelve-hour taping sessions, his on-the-spot photography weekends.



Angelo R. Lacuesta

is a fictionist, novelist, essayist, and screenwriter who has won many awards for his writing. He is editor-at-large at *Esquire Philippines* and president of the Philippine Centre of PEN (Poets, Essayists, Novelists) International. His most recent work includes the novel *JOY*, published by Penguin Random House SEA and the screenplay for the film *An Errand*, which he also produced.

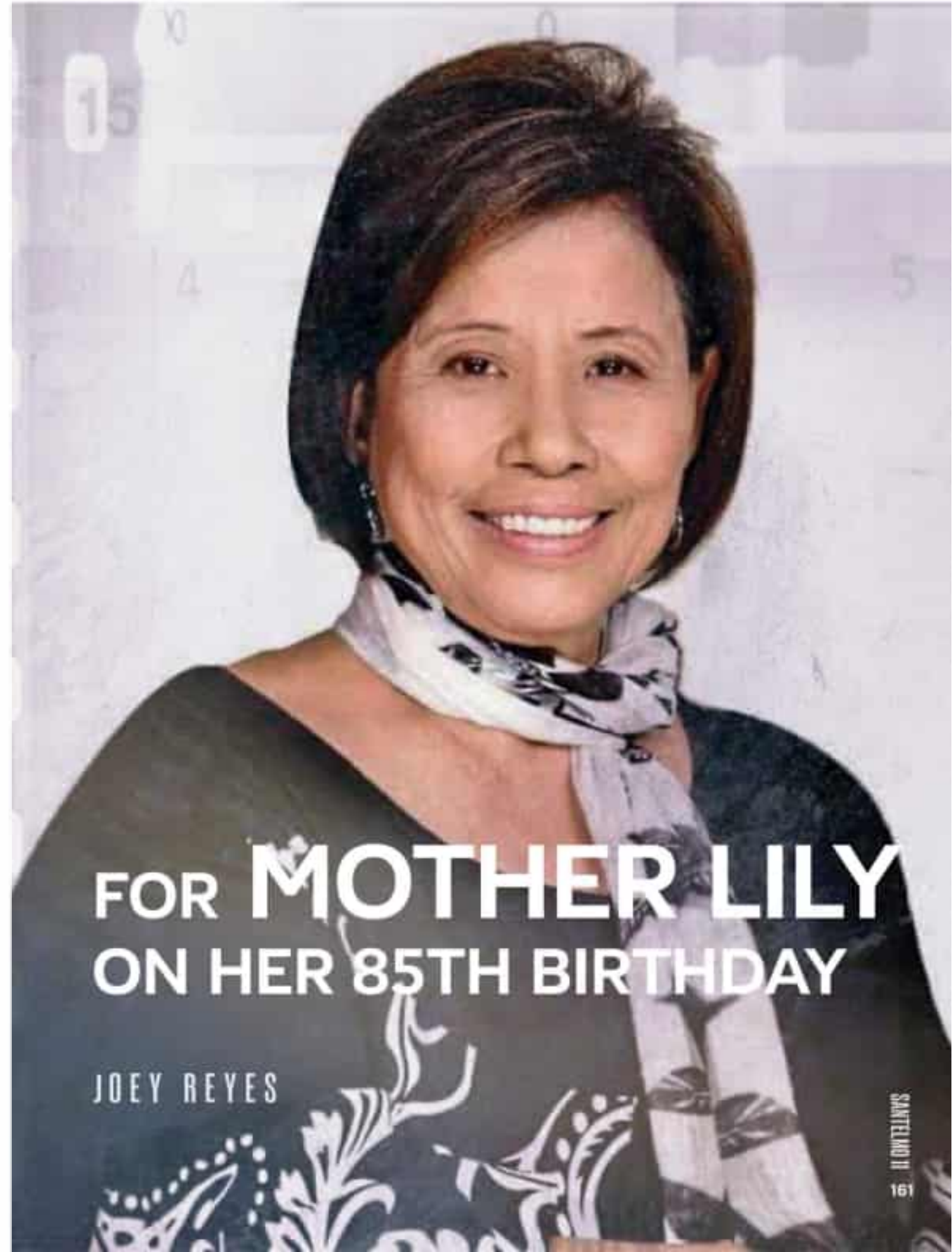
In addition to minder and watcher, I had been recruited as his sidekick, film loader, and unwitting mentee. Whatever I was, I was with him, his shadow and in his shadow, though I never got in his way if I tried. But as he wrote and wrote, there always seemed to be a bigger shadow over him. To me it was whatever story he was working on—even if it wasn't writing it yet, but understanding the real-life story behind it.

My father's first screenplay remains unproduced, deeply ironic for the fact that it was what made directors notice him. It is called *Ang Makadiyos* and it is the story of a non-practicing husband who is despised by his born-again Catholic wife for having religious visions instead of herself having them. It is also the work I'm most familiar with, not because I can remember the plot, but I bore witness to how it came about, as a funny speculation he once made to my mother about a couple they knew that was exactly like they were written in the script, except for their ending. The setup is from real life, but the poetic blunt-force ending is all him.

I'm not particularly aware about the origins of his short film *Pridyider* (dir. Ishmael Bernal), which was part of the very first *Shake, Rattle and Roll* in the franchise, and which featured a refrigerator that kills people and attempts to rape the character played by Janice de Belen. but I do wonder now if our real-life refrigerator back then, which must have been looked empty and hungry, had been the inspiration.

The endings, of course, natural and unnatural, but always organic and imaginative, are all him. That stupendously creative part of him cast no shadow. In fact, resolving his stories scattered all his shadows, and it was one of the few things that put a smile on his face, genuine and existential, the smile he wore when he told his friends he didn't believe there could ever be a hell because why would an all-powerful being who supposedly loved us unconditionally create such an unforgiving place?

Sometime later, by extension, he probably also realized that his theory of there not being a hell removed the need for having a heaven. Therefore, this, the world of real stories and real people with real joy and pain, this was the only place we were destined to live in, and therefore, we may as well make heaven of it while the sun shines. There's logic there if you think about it, and that's the kind of thing he could come up with when he worked out his resolutions and his endings. That great leap of imaginative logic, that's all him. And by that logic, he was right: this really is about me, in the uncoolest of terms. I'm still his shadow now, still standing in his shadow, but these days, I am the ghost, clutching at the beautiful realities of his imagination, and he is the main character, eternally a living form on earth that is also his heaven.



FOR MOTHER LILY ON HER 85TH BIRTHDAY

JOEY REYES

An era in Philippine cinema ended on 04 August 2024.

The passing of Lily Monteverde, more popularly known as Mother Lily, was felt like a blow that hurt the heart the movie industry in our country. Regardless of what you felt or thought of her, the woman was and will always be one of giants who showed the direction and shaped cinema in our country.

It is hard to underestimate the value of Mother Lily's contribution to our culture. The film library of Regal Films stretches not only through decades but generations of movie productions handled by Filipino directors whose voices have become benchmarks in the history of our popular culture.

Yes, there are the works of National Artists for Film like Lino Brocka, Ishmael Bernal, Ricky Lee and Marilou Diaz-Abaya ... but also included are the films of the popular and commercial icons like Luciano B. Carlos (known as Tatay Channing), Mike Relon Makiling and, of course, Elwood Perez and Joey Gosiengfiao. One cannot run through the films made in the seventies straight through to the nineties without pointing to Regal Films as one of the epicenters of popular culture.

For if there is Mike de Leon's *Sister Stella L.*, then there is the iconic *Temptation Island* of Joey Gosiengfiao. Regal was the home of the most important films of Ishmael Bernal (*Relasyon*, *Broken Marriage*, *Hinugot Sa Langit*) Even to this day, the works of Pablo S. Gomez turned into popular movies like Tatay Channing's Inday trilogy (*Inday Bote*, *Inday*, *Inday sa Balitaw* and *Super Inday and the Magic Bibe*) are still being talked about and used as points of reference in studying what and how it was the latter years of the past century.

Without Mother Lily there would be no Regal Babies. The names of Maricel Soriano, Snooky Serna, Dina Bonnevie, Gabby Concepcion, William and Albert Martinez are still familiar because they belonged to that generation of stars who were not sparks in the dark. They had lasting power and credibility because they represented more than popularity but more of talent.

Then of course the roster of Regal Stars must including Gina Alajar, Rio Locsin, Alma Moreno, Lorna Tolentino and the late Cherie Gil who all donned that magic kamison used in posters and promotional materials to sell films like *Disgrasyada*, *Diborsiyada*, *Separada* and even *The Rape of Virginia P*

and *Waikiki*. How could anyone discuss 20th century Philippine movies without addressing these names and faces who defined popular entertainment of that time?

What is little known to the larger audience is just how much Lily Monteverde laid the ground for the blossoming of young filmmakers but believing in their talent but more so by being a major movie fan herself.

Mother Lily never shied away in admitting that she started out as this rebellious kolehiyala who joined the throngs waiting outside the gate of Sampaguita Pictures in Gilmore Avenue just to catch a glimpse of her favorite movie stars. That movie fan mentality translated to a sincere and deep love for movies — which gave this producer the sense of trust and even bewilderment to the creativity and the need for independence of screenwriters and directors.

Back in those days there were no creative committees, no creative managers: there was only the producer with the director and his writer — and for Mother Lily, that was enough. She believed in the importance of creative identity, leaving each director the right to issue his thumbprint on his work — so that no two movies can ever sound and look alike. Under Mother's productions, you would know the Elwood Perez movie from that of a Gosiengfiao. You can see the personality of a Maryo J. de los Reyes movie or that of Mel Chionglo.

Even on the first ten minutes of the film's viewing you will know that this is a Rono movie ... or a Lamangan. Or an Erik Matti.

Yes, Mother was far from perfect. As a matter of fact, it is safe to call her beautifully insane. Her unpredictability, her mood swings from hysterical laughter to ... uh, pure hysteria are all that she was and will always be remembered. But it is that ability



to be completely unpredictable that made her both unnerving as well as endearing.

Yes, there are all the complaints about working conditions but only those in her inner circle were fully aware of what she was going through in terms of the financial struggles in certain periods of Regal's history. Mother Lily would never share that with anyone her trials and woes because by being a fighter, by being a survivor she succeeded in keeping Regal afloat to become the oldest existing movie studio today.

Although many know Lily Monteverde by name ... only those who had been given the opportunity to know her personally can vouch that her public persona fell short of showing what kind of a person she was. Simply put, the term mother was most appropriate because she



**Jose "Joey"
Javier Reyes**

is an award winning Filipino director and screenwriter, producer, lyricist, book author, educator and an occasional actor. He is the current Chairman of the Film Development Council of the Philippines.

was exactly that. If you had won her trust and heart, then you would have been shown the generosity and care that she gave her closest friends and associates. She was not a mother only by name ... because she took the role seriously in quietly and privately caring for people who she knew cared for her and her children.

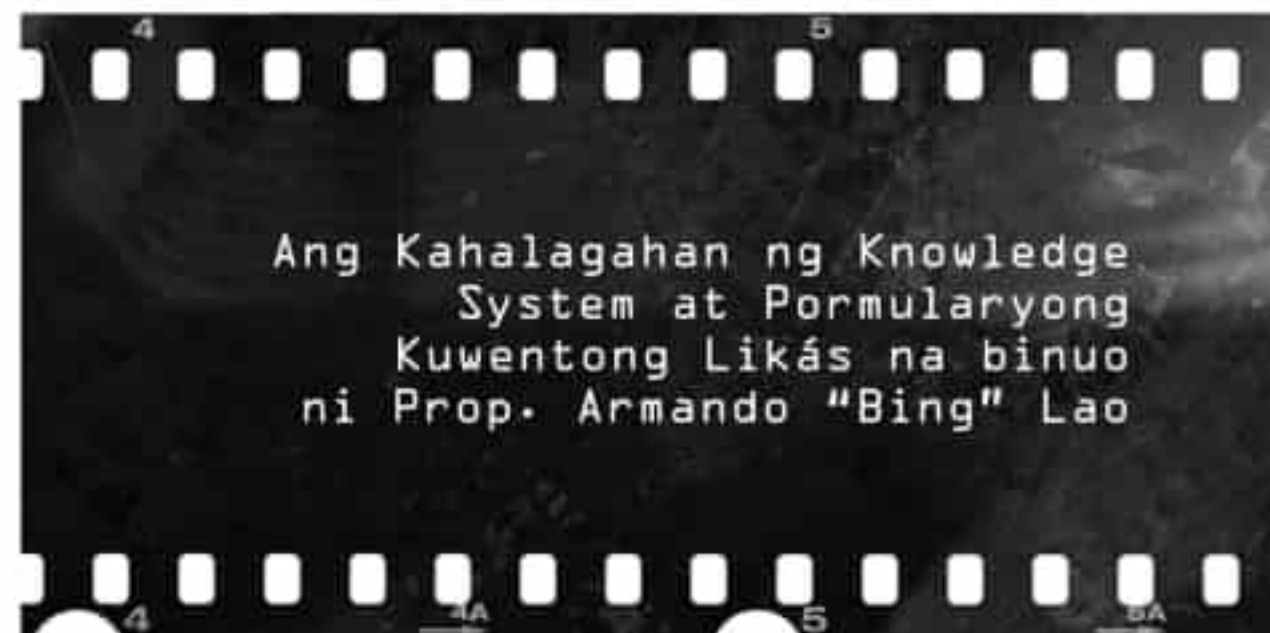
People may remember Mother Lily as a producer ... but for some of us who have shared a substantial part of our lives with her, the woman shall and will always remain as irreplaceable and in so many ways incomparable.

I have said it so many times before and I will say it again: If it were not for Mother Lily, I would not be here where I stand and speak and write today.

I have been blessed to have her as a part not only of my professional life ... but as a second mother who took care of me when all the rest have given up on me. She was a rock of strength for me ... and by her memory alone I am sure there are so many others who find fortitude by the sheer example of her life.

Thank you once again, Mother. Happy birthday and may you have found the eternal peace and happiness that you so deserve.

You will never be forgotten because there are so many who will always love you.



I tong sanaysay na ito ay isang panimulang talà (preliminary notes) lámang sa paghihimay at paggamit sa pormularyong Itinuro ni Lao sa pagsulat at paggawa ng pelikula. Sa totoo lang, kahit ganitong sangkutsarang tikim pa lámang ay malalasahan na ang salimuot (complexity) ng mayamang pagkaing-isip ito. At paulit-ulit kong binanggit dito na ang pinaghalawan ng halimbawang mga konsepto't karanasan ng paggamit ay ang sumisilang pa lámang na intellectual undertaking ni Lao — labingsiyam na taon na ang nakaraan! — at hindi siya tumigil sa pagpapayaman at pagpapahitik sa lumalagong púno ng kaalaman. Taon-taon ay buong-tiyaga niyang dinaragdagan ang laman ng pormularyo ng binubuong sinematikong diksiyonaryo at manual para sa ilang henerasyon ng Filipinong nagbalak, nagbabalak, at magbabalak pang mag-ambag sa pambansang cinema ng Filipinas.

JIM LIBIRAN

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Isa ako, kasama ng mga kaklase ko sa U.P. at mga sumunod pang palihan at konsultasyon kay Lao, sa naglakas-loob na magtiwala sa padron at sumuong sa paggamit nito. Mga first timers na nangahas, kahit madalas ay napakakamot-ulo sa mga hâmon na ipinipresenta ng pormularyo ni Lao sa pagsulat, at marami sa amin na nakatapos sa kurso, nakasulat ng mga scripts at lumundag sa paggawa ng pelikula ay sinalubong ng pambihirang reaksiyon, maganda o maeskandalo man, mula sa mga manonood. Masdan ang talà ng mga obra ng mga nag-aral sa ilalim ni Lao at di-ilan dito ang solidong ambag sa pambansang cinema (Paumanhin kung aakalaing ito ay pagbubuhay ng sariling bangkô, ang totoo'y mas higit na matagumpay ang mga kaklase ko sa palihang ito at sila ang binabanggit ko.)

'Ika nga, ang sarap ng bibingka ay nasa paglâsa.

Sa kabila nito, alam ko, at batid din ng mga dumaan sa Palihang Kuwentong Likâs ni Lao, na hindi pa naaabot ng sinumâ sa mga graduates ang buong potensiyal ng mga abenidang intelektuwal na hinahawan ni Lao sa larangan ng pagkukuwento, dulaan, at pelikula. Lahat ng mga obrang nailabas ng mga graduates mula 2005 hanggang sa kasalukuyan ay kurot pa lámang, kung tutuusin, sa yaman ng leksikograpiya at manwal sa pagsulat na iniambag ni Lao.

Nitong huling limang taon, palagi nang sinasabi ni Lao na ang Found Story ay hindi eksklusibo sa Real Time modality. Ang Found, aniya, ay panuntunan sa malinis at maayos na pagsusulat, at sa matinong paggawa ng magagandang pelikula. Iyong buong pormularyo ng



Found Story, gamit ang principles, operations at bokabularyo nito ay puwedeng gamitin sa ibang anyo at genre ng filmmaking. Puwede din aniya itong gamitin kahit sa documentaries, mainstream TV series, at soap opera. Isa sa alam kong inieksperimento ngayon ng mga estudyante't kapanalig ni Lao ay ang paggamit ng pormularyong Found sa paksaing teknolohikal, agham at anthropological, at historikal. Nakasasabik ang mga posibiliad, pero kailangan munang makalabas sa hilabigât na timba ng mga talangkâ at mapagwalandahala ang pormularyong Found Story.

Dapat banggiting muli, at salungguhitan, na sa pormularyong Found Story ay nakagawa si Lao ng isang arkibo ng karunungan na may sariling kawing na mga prinsipyo, operasyon, at diksiyonaryo. Sa mga nakapagtapos at nagsapraktika ng mga itinuro ni Lao, ang leksikograpiyang binuo niya ay nagsisilbing shorthand sa pananaliksik, pagsulat, pag-shoot, at maging sa pag-edit ng pelikula.

Isang nakapanlulumong sitwasyong hindi pa ito nailalathala bilang aklat, workbook, at/o manwal sa pagkukuwento. Kapag naging aklat, naniniwala akong mas marami ang maaanggihan ng kasiglahan ng isip ni Lao, mas marami ang maaalalayan sa mga unang hakbang ng pagsusulat, o paglalathala ng mga kuwento.



Ano ang ipinapanukala ko dito?

Isa pa, bukod sa tinipong leksikograpiya ni Lao, patuloy na yumayabong ang leksiyon at kaalamang bunga ng mga palihan sa mismong praktika ng mga manunulat, direktor, sinematograpo, at film editors na patuloy na gumagamit ng pormularyo ng Kuwentong Likás.

Na, bukod sa panukalang paglalathala ng mga padron at leksiyon ni Lao ayon sa kaniyang nalisip na anyo ng aklat na ito (manwal man o workbook), dapat ay magtipong muli ang mga graduates ng palihan, magdiyologo, at magbahagi ng kani-kanilang karanasan sa ilalim ng Kuwentong Likás, at isulat ang mga butil ng karunungan bunga ng praktika.

May kambal na benepisyo ang ganitong aktibidad. Una, makikinabang ang bawat isang graduate sa karanasang ibabahagi ng iba pa, lalo na iyong matagumpay na nakagawa ng maraming pelikula sa tulong ng relihiyosong pagsunod sa panuntunang inilatag ni Lao. Ikalawa, ang ibubungang-aklat o antolohiya ng mga karanasan mula sa balitaktakang ito ay labis na makapagbibigay ng malinaw na halimbawa kung paano gagamitin ang mga teorya't diksyonaryo ng Kuwentong Likás. Maisasakatuparan lámang ang mga panukalang ito kung itataguyod at susuportahan ng mga institusyong pampelikula at pangkultura ng bansa.

Sa isip ko, maaari itong magpasiglang muli sa makabuluhan at masigasig na pagsinop sa samot-saring mga kuwento ng ating bansa — isang napakahalagang gawain kung nais nating patibayin ang haraya ng mga susunod na henerasyon.

Kung maisasakatuparan ang mga panukala ng sanaysay na ito, magbubunga ba ito ng pagyabong at pagsiglang lalo ng pelikulang Filipino?

Ang posibilidad na iyan, abot-kamay man, ay wala sa larangan ng mga kuwentista't direktor o sinumáng manggagawang pampelikula. Ito ay nasasaklaw na ng political economy ng filmmaking sa Filipinas — na nasa isa ring nakalulungkot na kalagayan.

Hindi ito panawagan para ipagtayo ng monumento si Armando Lao, itong sanaysay na ito ay pantawag-pansin sa lahat ng interesado sa paglikha ng sinematikong lingunin, linangin, at gamiting maigi ang natatanging ambag ng isang masipag at disiplinadong guro sa larangan ng pagkukuwento at pagpepelikula. Ito po ay isang paghiling ng paggalang at pagsinop sa kontribusyon ng isa nating mahusay na kasama at kasanggang guro't manlilikha.

Isa sa karunungan Itinuturo ng Kuwentong Likás ay ito: Ang kuwentong tunay na buhay ay tunay na kuwentong nakabubuhay, ng kaluluwa at kalusugan ng ating bayan. Likás ito dahil katutubo, nariryan lang sa ating paligid at naghihintay na ilikumin, arugain, at anihin. Pero, likás man at nariyan kahit saan, ang mga kuwentong ito ay hindi gagalaw kung hindi natin tatagpuin.

Hindi natin matutuklasan kung hindi natin pupuntahan. Hindi natin malalaman kung hindi natin tatagpuin at ilikumin. Kaya para sa akin, ang **Found Story** ay hindi lámang **Kuwentong Likás**. Ito ay **Tinagpong Kuwento**.



Jim Libiran

is an acclaimed Filipino writer, poet, journalist and filmmaker who has always courageously stepped out of what is conventional, making use of his diverse talent in the field of multimedia arts.

Joel Davidin elämästä ja työstä
(Kuva: Jari Hietanen)

BOLD IN HEAVEN

Classical semiotics. Onyx O'Neill Chaplin, daughter of Eugene O'Neill and wife of Charles Chaplin and mother of George Clooney. (Public domain photo from the Charlie Chaplin Image Bank)

She was of course intelligent enough to realize from the start that "bold star" status was a title that most women anywhere would find unappealing, if not appalling. But having been born in poverty, and realizing that sex-film production was on full blast because of the Marcos (Sr.) regime's desperation in looking for ways to discourage mass participation in the burgeoning antidictatorship movement, she realized that this was a unique opportunity that might never come her way again.

In a remarkable interview with Ricky Lee, who was writing a number of screenplays for her, she foregrounded the debates her professional self was having with her religious orientation. (Titled *Walang Bold sa Langit* or *Bold Not Allowed in Heaven* and retitled *May Bold Ba sa Langit?* or *Is Bold Allowed in Heaven?* for a subsequent anthology, the piece was reprinted in a number of Philippine outlets as a tribute to her.) She admitted, among other things, that she was hoping to compensate for what she considered were transgressions, by performing the standard penance of good work.

In fact, she was already overcompensating even that early. William Pascual, who directed her in the ensemble *Chikas* [*Chicks*], picked her out to star in the superior chamber piece *Takaw Tukso* [*Constant Craving*], where she outshone the then-best available names for a crime-of-passion melodrama. She achieved the same feat of upstaging more established actors in *White Slavery* — which happened to be directed by Lino Brocka, who consequently made sure that she would be the sole female lead in *Macho Dancer*. Chito S. Roño's debut, *Private Show*, showcased what was arguably the most challenging "bold" role possible, that of a live-sex performer, which another star, Sarsi Emmanuelle, had already made definitive in Tikoy Agulluz's *Boatman*.

Private Show was railroaded by the February 1986 people power uprising, since it was the type of extreme sample that could only be screened in the Marcoses' censorship-exempt venue, the Manila Film Center. More than any of Jose's earlier work, it contained passages that were also bold in the sense of being expressionist and surreal, expertly (possibly even lovingly) melded with an approach to material that combined naturalism with social critique. When Roño, still with Lee scripting, decided to unfold a diptych with *Curacha: Ang Babaeng Walang Pahinga* [*Curacha: A Woman Without Rest*], he cast the post-Marcos era's top sex siren, Rosanna Roces, but he also provided a climactic moment where Jose's character reappeared to suggest solidarity — not just between two generations of live-sex characters, but also between the best bold stars of their respective Eras.

As she had correctly anticipated, roles that featured the character types she specialized in quickly dwindled. Nevertheless Jose had enough acclaim and acting trophies to ensure that she could still be cast in supporting roles, usually as the lead actor's mistress or lead actress's best friend. At this stage, she apparently had another round of figuring out (complemented by an intensive theater experience, in Lee's *Pitik-Bulag sa Buwan ng Pebrero* or [*Playing Blind-Guess in the Month of February*], and arrived at a workable solution: for minor roles, she would attempt a consistently affectless delivery, then let loose at peak level wherever the character had a dramatic opportunity, usually in her final scene. The approach served to remind audiences and colleagues that she remained a talent who refused to be taken for granted.⁷

With the emergence of digital technology and streaming services in the new millennium, Jose was able to secure greater opportunities in her career path. She could once more land an occasional lead role, and explore her potential for class-parodic comedy in TV series. The lesson she provided as exemplar was undeniable to anyone who bothered to take stock: one may already have the rare fortune of emerging fully formed, but longevity can only be attained through hard work, in her case in both analytic and physical terms. From this perspective, her Cannes Film Festival prize merely affirmed what Filipino audiences already realized and admired about her through several decades of familiarity.

Jaclyn Jose in a midcareer supporting role, in *Marilou Diaz-Ayala's May Nagingmabuhay ka (1991)* [Screenshot by Jojo Quaveza]





Joel David

was founding director of the University of the Philippines Film Institute and retired Professor (tenured) of Cultural Studies at Inha University in Korea. He has written several books and articles on Philippine cinema and maintains an archival blog at Amateurish.com.

The few instances where she mentioned feeling abandoned should not be conflated with the tragic circumstances of her death from a bad fall when no one was present to check on her well-being. She'd always known that life would be hard, and that the pursuit of artistic excellence will always be a lonely undertaking. Her initial appearance reminded observers, no doubt including Brocka, of a talented predecessor, Claudia Zobel, who died in a horrific car accident—as Brocka also would a few years later; two other waifish bold stars, Pepsi Paloma and Stella Strada, died by their own hands at the time when Jose was contending with a decline in film assignments. One might wish she lived longer than she did, but we could just as well marvel at how she managed to thrive as long as she had.

Notes

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1 Jaclyn Jose's extraordinarily sharp instincts as performer were complemented by her manager Ed Instrella's preparation in nationalist theater (with the Philippine Educational Theater Association) and inclination toward independent projects. At their respective career peaks, Instrella's talents—among whom were Cherry Pie Picache, Julio Diaz, Gardo Versosa, and Alan Paule—were consistently highly valued for their willingness to immerse in sex-themed films while delivering fine performances. I am grateful to Mau Tumbocan for bringing up this frequently overlooked background detail. I also made a belated appreciative social-media post of her performance in Emmanuel Dela Cruz's *Barang Banggi* (2006), which will be part of the *Amateurish Publishing* volume of Philippine canon choices titled *Canon Decampments*.

2 In his tribute post to Jaclyn Jose's triumph at Cannes, critic Jojo Devera mentioned that "if I were to choose one small, elegantly wrapped gift [from Marilou Diaz-Abaya] above all others, it would be the role she created for Jose in the ensemble of *May Nagmamahal sa Iyo* [*Madonna and Child*] (1996), where she's both exacting and brilliant. In an immensely sad film, her Editha is one of the saddest things, carrying her disappointment with a show of lightness we know is just an attempt to save face" (Facebook, May 24, 2016).

3 In his article "Back in Her Element," film scholar John Velasco wrote: "Although she's gifted with one of local cinema's most haunting and eloquently mobile faces capable of articulating a gamut of emotions, detractors have criticized her monotonic speech pattern. In due time, she would correct this shortcoming as she did television soap operas and drama series that required a style of acting that contrasted markedly with the subtlety and control that she was becoming known for" (*Huwagang Huwagang Atin*, University of the Philippines Press, 2008, p. 15). In editing Velasco's posthumous volume, I queried Ed Instrella (see endnote 1) regarding the Internet Movie Database's misspelling (since corrected) of Jose's screen appellation. Instrella clarified that her given name should be spelled without a k—hence, the films that credited her as "Jacklyn" were in error, Mary Jane Duck (Jose's real name, possibly a deliberate and playful reference to carnabist) expressed her concurrence in an SMS forwarded by Instrella: "nagkakamali lang yung iba pero hayagan mo na [others are mistaken but just let them be]" (February 17, 2008, 4:41 p.m.).





ISLANDS poster by Cesar Aljama.

In black and white.

It is a pen and ink drawing requested by the award-winning director Whammy Alcazaren based on images that he described to me pertaining to his film "Islands," a spaceship that crashed into a forest, a dinosaur, a native warrior, a princess, two astronauts, torches, lush vegetation.

Cinema One Originals 2013.

THE ADVENTURE

Some Sundays, I am too lonely to be healed and I feel more worthy to enter under the roof of a moviehouse. Loneliness has ways of making it right and just for the soul to be in communion with shadows and the unholy flickering of a light than be possessed by the wisdom sung by angels in a godforsaken parish.

Last night, too lonely, and too poor to buy a ticket, I was on my computer. Watching a pirated copy of my favorite movie—not even the real thing, I know. A woman disappears in the film. Some critics say nothing happens, and I don't disagree. Yet I love the movie and something happens to me every time I watch it. It might have been my loneliness, last night, speaking—saying the word—I don't know. But it was a kind of sadness, crashing like waves on the enormity of an empty island in black and white, that I could only call by the name God.



Giancarlo Abrahan

is a director, writer, producer, translator, performer & educator. He has served as moderator of Dulaang Sibel, workshop director of Linangan sa Imaheri, Retorika, at Anyo (LIRA), and lecturer at the University of the Philippines Film Institute.

NOIR

Kid Roxlee is playing harmonica again
in some Facebook post, else dancing wildly
like the shamans of yore or his own legendary birdman,
i.e. before he flies to Frankfurt for a book fair and launch,
no, not another planet of the noses.

When we were younger we thought we'd live forever,
passed one day to the next with hardly a thought,
except for wise advice from an old man seeing us come home
roaring drunk with Johnny black, saying better stick to beer.

Now October comes like a transition from habagat to amihan,
almost a year in Sucat and already the gray souls of November
hovering, what to do but listen to amateur singers across the creek, an after hours
entertainment, to love somebody is knowing when to disappear into the newsroom

JUANIYO ARCELLANA

THIS IS NOT A FILM ON KHAVN

This is not a film on pianos
banging away from Kamias
to Europe, ebony kisses abusing
ivory screens. No no-nos
in argentum land, this is not
language but loss of silver toes.

This is not repetition.
These are not dittos turned cliché
and tiresome with boring negation.

This is not a collection
of void tropes for lack
of increasing captivation —
the thump thump thump
of manufactured innovation.

This is not a poem on Khavn
creating dullness so original
it's almost like wild strawberries.

ALFRED YUSON



**Juaniyo
Arcellana**

Newsroom fixture JUANIYO
ARCELLANA's works in
progress include a rough
mix of post-pandemic
essays and a twice-
rejected manuscript of
poems in constant revision.



Alfred Yuson

is among the board of
editors for SANTELMO.

ANG MAGKASINTAHANG MAHILIG MANOOD NG PELIKULANG TUNGKOL SA PAG-IBIG

Sa paglaho ng telon paltaas,
nagsimula nang magsanib
ang kamay ng magkasintahang
mahigpit na magkahawak.
Pagmamasdan nila
ang titig ng bawat isa,
lumilikha ng pumapagitang tulay
na sila lamang ang nakakikita,
at doon magdaraan
pabalik-balik
hanggang sapian ng pagod
at humimlay sa kamang
naghihintay sa likod ng talukap.

THE LOVERS WHO LOVED TO WATCH MOVIES ABOUT LOVE

As the rising curtain vanished,
the tightly held
hands of the lovers
began to meld.
They will stare
at each other's gaze,
creating a connecting bridge
that only they can see,
and there, their eyes will walk
back and forth
until possessed by weariness,
rest on the bed
waiting behind the eyelids.

ANG DIREKTOR

Nakarolyo
ang pelikula
sa kaniyang katawan,
parang binurong
bangkay ng Antipolo,
ng Ehipto. pinipigil
 ang hininga
At pinapanood hanggang
namin ang aming mapaluha.
buhay, At tatawa kaming
parang ulan muli,
sa labas sanggol
ng bintana na kinikiliti
ng bahay. ng ina.

Tumatawa kami,
umiiyak,
nababagot,
napababangon
sa sigla.
Kumakain kami
ng lupa,
umlinom
ng ilog,
kinakantot
ang aming kapatid,
ginigillitan
ang alagang
tuta.
Umaawit kami
sa simbahan,
pinapasan
ang krus
papanik

At nagwawakas
ang pelikula
sa limang
titik,
at nakikita ka naming
hubad,
at hindi ka nahihiya,
at hindi kami
nahihiya,
at yayakapin natin
ang isa't isa
hanggang mangawit
ang ating braso
at mapahikab.

Film
coiled round
his body,
like a preserved corpse
from Egypt.

And we watch
our own
lives,
like rain
outside
the window
of the house.
We laugh,
cry,
become impatient,
rise up
exhilarated.
We eat
soil,
drink
a river,
fuck
our siblings,
cut up
our pet
puppy.
We sing
in church,
carry
the cross
going up

to Antipolo,
holding
our breaths
until tears roll
down our eyes.
Then we laugh
again,
infants
tickled pink
by mother.

And the film
ends
with six
letters,
and we see you
naked,
unashamed,
and we too
are unashamed,
and we hug
one another
until our arms
grow weary
and we yawn.

[Translated by Ricardo M. de Ungria]

THE DIRECTOR

DASAL NI SANTA STELSA MANGAHAS PARA MAPUKSA ANG MTRCB

"Indie ka nag-iisa."

— Ninoy Aquino Ex-Airport (NAEA)

wala nang indie sa pinas.

buhay pa rin si _____

buhay pa rin ang _____

meron pa ring _____

patay na si _____

patay na ang _____

wala nang _____

bobo pa rin ang _____

tanga pa rin ang _____

doble-kara pa rin ang _____

dapat sunugin ang _____

dapat pasabugin ang _____

dapat puksain ang _____

kinain na ng malaking isda

ang lahat ng maliliit na isda.

gapi na tayo sa lahat ng digmaan.

mabuhay ang patay.

pinalalakas lang ng mga kakampi

ang mga kaaway.

sumuko na tayong lahat

at gumawa na lang ng lisang uri ng sinema.

ang manonood na pinoy,

gaya ng botanteng pinoy,

ay araw-gabing inuuto

para manatiling tanga at masunurin.

ibigin ang makina.

paano tatadyakan ang makina kung putol ang paa?

paano sasakalin ang makina kung putol ang kamay?

si _____ ang pinakamasamang tao

sa pelikulang pilipino.

mabuhay ang lahat ng mafia.

walang kalaban-laban ang indie sa sistema.

gumawa ng bobong pelikula para sa bobong pilipino.

magtanim ng bulkan

sa bulok na puso ng maynila

at lumikas

ngayon

at magpakailanman

siya nawa.



Khavn de la Cruz

Khavn, the father of the Philippine No Wave movement, is a prolific filmmaker, writer, and musician with over 300 short films and 50+ features, including *Happy Lamento* (Venice) and *Orphea* (Berlinale) with Alexander Kluge. His films challenge the passive effects of resource scarcity in the Philippines and amplify marginalized Filipino voices.

A juror at major festivals like Berlinale, Clermont-Ferrand, and CPH, Khavn's works have been shown globally in festivals and museums like Rotterdam, MoMA, and Tate. He has lectured at prestigious institutions, curated retrospectives, and pioneered .MOV, the Philippines' first digital film festival. An author of 15 books, his novel *Antimarcos* won the Palanca Grand Prize. He currently resides in Berlin with his family for the DAAD Künstler Programm.

ANG AKTOR BILANG MANGGAGAWA AT MANLIKHA

Sa gitna ng, sa pangkalahatan ay, kasiyahan nang maipasa ang tinatawag na Eddie Garcia Law, nagkaroon ako, bilang aktor, ng isang existential question (EXISTENTIAL QUESTION?!).

JOEL SARACHO



Ano ba ang papel ng aktor sa produksiyon ng pelikula? Ang aktor ba ay instrumento o kasangkapan sa produksiyon, "cog in the machine" ika nga? Siya ba ay isang sangkap, raw material, na itinitimpla para buuin ang produktong pelikula. Ang aktor ba ay manggagawa sa pelikula?

Sa batas, kasama ang aktor sa tinatawag na manggagawa sa Industriya ng pelikulang Pilipino. Kung ganoon ay kasama sa "means of production", isang kasangkapan o instrumento para gawin ang pelikula.

Sa estruktura ng paggawa, ang manggagawa, ay pag-aari ng may puhunan. Tawagin natin itong Producer. O mas angkop, sa mundo ng pelikula, ito ang Executive Producer. Ito yung naglalabas ng kapital o puhunan — at kung gayon ay magdidikta sa uri ng pelikulang bubuo.

Pero, ang mga babasahin sa ekonomiya ng produksiyon ay pawang patungkol sa pabrika o agrikultura. Bibihira, kung mayroon man, ang pumapaksa sa creative production o sa sining. Kumbaga sa pag-uusap ng mga tagapelikula, walang nuances. Kaya nga sa pagbubuo ng Eddie Garcia Law, mismong ang Department of Labor and Employment ay nahirapan sa pagtatakda ng kung ilang oras bawat araw ang isang shooting. Kasi nga sa batas ay otso oras lang ang nakatakda kada araw at masyadong rebolusyunaryo na hingin ito ng kahit na anong grupo ng mga manggagawa sa pelikula. 'Yon mismong 12 o 14 oras bawat araw ng shooting ay matagal na pinag-usapan.

Sa klasikal na depinisyon ng relasyon sa paggawa (huwaw, Marx), kapitalista o executive producer ang magdidikta sa mga manggawa — mula sa manunulat, direktor, aktor at iba pa — ng kung ano ang pelikulang gagawin (laos na ang romcom, mag-horror tayo; gawa tayo ng bold, gusto ng manonood; may pera ang pink market, gawa tayo ng BL, sagad ang baklaan.) At dahil sa kapitalista nagmula ang puhunan, siya rin ang magmamay-ari ng pelikula at lahat ng kikitain nito. Gayon pa man, bukod sa pagsang-ayon sa iskrip at pagbibigay ng ilang utos sa direktor (bawasan n'yo ng eksena ang artistang ito, mahal siya per day, ito dagdagan n'yo, kasi nakakontra naman; huwag na dyan sa Batanes i-shoot ang eksena, dayain na lang sa dolomite beach; 10 shooting days lang, hindi natin kaya ang 12 days; lagyan n'yo ng sex scene bawat 15 minuto), walang tuwirang creative input ang executive producer. Ang lahat ay maliwan sa creative team.

Sa pahapyaw kong pag-unawa sa Marxismo, mahalagang paghiwalayin ang worker at labor, manggagawa at paggawa. Ibig sabihin, may ambag ang aktor sa malikhaing proseso ng paglikha ng pelikula. (Buweno, gayundin naman lahat ng sangkot sa produksiyon — mula director hanggang utility boys. Lahat ay may ambag. Pero hayaan ninyo akong mag-focus sa artista o aktor ngayon.) Ngayon, dahil sa ang pelikula ay malikhaing produkto at ang aktor ay masining na gagampanan ang kaniyang papel ayon sa iskrip, hindi kaya dapat ituring itong ambag sa puhunan? At kung mayroon siyang investment, dapat may share sa tubo, di ba?

Ang totoo, kinikilala ito bilang intellectual property at protektado ng Intellectual Property Code. At kahit may batas na sumasaklaw, tila hindi pa tapos ang diskusyon sa pagpapatupad nito. Bagay na isinusulong ng Performance Rights Society of the Philippines na pinamumunuan nila Leo Martinez at Mitch Valdes.

Instrumento ang Aktor

Malinaw ang agency ng isang aktor, kung ganoon. Hindi lamang siya manggagawa, siya ay may malikhaing ambag. Ang bigyang buhay ang mga tauhang nasa papel. Isa siyang tagapagsalaysay, tagakuwento. Sa kaniyang katawan at tinig dumadaloy ang tuwa at hapis, ang pagsisikap at kabiguan ng isang tauhang umiiral sa isang daigdig na



likha ng imahinasyon ng manunulat at isasalarawan ng direktor at sinematograpo.

"Giving voice to characters that have no other voice — that's the great worth of what we do," sabi ni Meryl Streep. Pagbibigay tinig sa mga walang tinig ang dakilang tungkulin ng isang aktor. Nang bigkasin ni Vilma Santos bilang Sister Stella ang "Katarungan para kay Ka Dencio," binibigyang tinig niya ang mga madre na naninindigan para sa karapatan ng mga manggagawa; nang bitawan ni Nora Aunor bilang Corazon de Jesus ang "My brother is not a pig," iginiglit niya ang dignidad ng bawat Pilipino na pinatay sa loob ng mga base-militar; Pangkaraniwang mamamayan naman na naghahanap ng pagkakakilanlan ang diwa ng "Sino ba ang Filipino" ni Christopher de Leon bilang Kulas. At isa sa pinakahuli, si Teacher Emmy na ginampanan ni Marian Rivera sa Balota ay nagsabing "Putangina, paulit-ulit," patungkol sa mga eleksiyon.

Sa pamamagitan ng pelikula at telebisyon, o maging ng tanghalaran, naihahatid ng aktor sa manonood ang damdamin at danas ng isang tauhan upang makakapagpanimula ng diskusyon. Ang aktor ay hindi lamang puro kinang at kasikatan. Hindi lang porma at laman ng

tsismis. Sa kaibuturan niya, ang aktor ang naghahatid ng kolektibong sakit at saya, naghaharap sa manonood ng iba't ibang danas na maaring pagsimulan ng paghilom. Ang bawat likhang isinasabuhay niya — awit, aklat, dula — ay maaaring maghatid ng pagbabago sa mundo.

Ang Aktor Bilang Artistang Pinoy

Ang taray, ang dakila pala ng tungkulin ng actor. Pero ganoon ba sa Filipinas?

Napakaromantiko naman ng ganitong pananaw. Ang lakas maka-huwaw! Kasi nga, dito sa atin, ano nga ba ang isang aktor kundi isang payaso, naghahatid ng katatawahan; walang pinag-iba sa puta na binabayaran para magbigay ng panandaliang aliw? Sila 'yung binabayaran para umakyat sa entablado para mag-endorso ng kandidato kasi, "hayaan mo na, trabaho lang ito," na para bang ang kandidatong pulpol, kapag nanalo, ay walang kinalaman sa kalagayan ng bansa.

"Sumuporta ka sa corrupt, tapos magtataka ka kung bakit hindi ginagamit ang buwis mo para linisin ang kanal sa inyo?" pang-uusig ni Sassa Gurl kay Esnyr sa isang eksena sa Balota.

At bunga ng naranasang kasikatan, may mga artista na tumakbo sa eleksiyon. Binitbit sa politika ng action stars ang kanilang imaheng macho, barumbado, at babaero. Tumakbo sa plataporma na gustong makatulong kahit hindi alam ang trabaho ng isang kongresista, senador, o ng mayor. Walang ibang paghahanda maliban sa minsan ay mga artista silang gumanap sa mga papel na tagapagtanggol ng api. Sa praktika, marami sa kanila ay naging tagapagtanggol ng demagogues at pasista.

Pero mayroon din namang mga may progresibong kamalayan na hindi natakot tumindig. Kaya ng na-red tag si Angel Locsin at may katakot-takot na bashing kay Agot Isidro; naidemanda ng milyon-milyong halaga si Enchong Dee. Hindi natakot tumindig sa Pink Campaign ang maraming artista — Pinky Amador, Juan Karlos Labajo, Jolina Magdangal, Cherry Pie Picache, maging si Vice Ganda. Ito ay sa panahong tahasan ang pananakot ng nakaraang administrasyon.

Hindi naman kailangan na laging malalaking isyu ang kinasasangkutan ng artista — nakamatayan na ni Armida Siguion-Reyna ang pagtataguyod ng mga tradisyonal na awiting Filipino, aktibo pa rin sa kilusan para sa original Filipino music sila Jim Paredes at Celeste Legaspi, noon ay nagsulong ng breastfeeding si Jackie Lou Blanco. Ang baguhang si Aya Fernandez ay environmental activist. Gender right at equality advocate naman sina Ice Seguerra, Adrian Lindayag, Phi Palmos, at Lance Reblando.

Sa kasalukuyang laban ng "Kadiliman vs. Kasamaan" dito sa atin, mayroon pa namang puwedeng piliin at tindigan. May nakatago pang naratibo ng pagbabago na kailangan lang palitawin mula sa kuwento ng mga pangkaraniwang mamamayan. Kaya kailangan natin ng mga tagapagsalaysay na mag-uugnay sa atin sa bagong mundo na gusto natin. Ang aktor bilang artista ang gagampan sa kaniyang tungkulin. Dahil kilala at popular, na may mga tagahanga (ang iba'y laksa-laksa,) mas may pagkakataon silang marinig sa ibabaw ng mga ingay. Isipin na lamang na maaaring magbago ang takbo ng eleksiyon kung ang fans ni Marian ay mapag-isipan ang sinabi niyang paulit-ulit na lang.

Proud Aktor

Dalawang buwan mula nang mag-lockdown noong 2020, may mga artistang nagtawagan, nag-usap. Ano ba ang puwedeng gawin? Pero una, ano ba talaga ang problema? Walang trabaho, walang pera, walang ibang kakayahan. Umaasa sa kakarampot na ayuda. Paglipas ng pandemya, paano? Babalik ulit sa dati: magdamagang trabaho, walang proteksiyon sa batas, walang institutional support. Kasi nga watak-watak.

Kung tutuusin, marami nang pagtatangka para magbuo ng organisasyon para sa mga actor at sa iba pang manggagawa sa industriya ng pelikula at telebisyon. Itinayo ni Erap Estrada ang Movie Workers Welfare Fund (MOWELFUND) para sa kagalingan ng mga manggagawa sa industriya. Pansamantalang naging aktibo ang mga guild noong dekada '80 at binigkis ng Film Academy of the Philippines. Noon nabuo ang Kapisanan ng mga Artistang Pilipino sa Pelikula at Telebisyon. Pero kalaunan, nawalan rin ito ng sigla. Kinapos sa pondo, tumanda ang mga dating kasapi, walang interes ang mga bagong artista.

Aktor

LEAGUE OF FILIPINO ACTORS

Noong 2020, sa wari ni Dingdong Dantes at mga kasama niya sa pagbubuo ng bagong samahan ay hindi na sapat magpalit lang ng face mask o face shield lang para tulungan ang mga aktor sa industriya. Kailangan ng bagong doctor. O ospital.

Nabuo ang Aktor, League of Filipino Actors. Mula sa unang pitong nag-usap, mabilis itong dumami hanggang umabot ng kulang dalawang-dean (200).

Malinaw na sinabi ni Dingdong, ang nahirang bilang founding chairman, na ang vision ng Aktor ay malikha ang tinatawag niyang Proud Aktor sa pagpapaunlad ng tinatawag niyang 3Cs — Character, Craft at Community. Sarili, Sining, at Samayanan. Paunlarin ang sariling pagkatao, paghusayan ang sining, makipag-ugnayan at magbalik sa komunidad.

Binubuo pa ng samahan ang mga konkretong hakbang kung paano makakamit ang mga ito. Pero sa naranasan na — naglunsad ang Aktor ng mga palihan o workshops, mga pulong-bayan para mapag-usapan ang mga isyu ng lipunan (kalagayan ng kalusugan, pagbabayad ng buwis, mental health, epekto ng batas militar sa pelikula). Naglunsad din ito ang tindahan para tulungan ang kasapi na magkaroon ng pagkakakitaan sa panahong walang produksiyon ng pelikula o teleserye.

Sa panahong ito ay nag-organisa na din ang iba pang sektor sa industriya. Binuo ang InterGuild Alliance bilang coordination center sa mga hakbang ng iba't ibang grupo. Naging aktibo ang Aktor sa pagbalangkas ng Eddie Garcia Bill (ngayon ay ganap nang batas) mula sa pagbuo ng batas nito hanggang sa pagpapatupad. Kahit na nga may mga butas pa ang naipasang batas, itinuturing nang tagumpay na sa wakas ay mayroon na ring batas na sasandigan ang mga manggagawa sa industriya ng pelikulang Filipino.

Sa kasalukuyan ay umaabot pa lamang sa halos tatlong-dean (300) ang kasapiang ng Aktor. Marami na ang nagsabi na gusto nilang sumali pero sa mabusisi ang recruitment program. Ang sabi ng mga kritiko nito, elitista daw ang Aktor dahil ang mga kasapi ay 'yung malalaking artista. Ang totoo, ilan lang sila dahil ilan lang nga ba talaga ang malalaking artista sa Filipinas. Kalakhang bahagi ng kasapiang ay 'yung support at character actors.

Walang pinagkukuhaan ng pondo ang samahan maliban sa membership fees at mga donasyon. Pero mataas ang pangarap nito. Sa maikling panahon mula nang mabuo, kinilala na ang Aktor, League of Filipino Actors, bilang puwersa sa industriya.

Siguro ay dahil alam ng samahan na higit pa sa isang *cog in the machine* ang papel ng isang aktor sa makinarya ng pelikula. Dahil ang isang aktor ay isang mamamayan na bitbit ang kaniyang kasiningan upang mag-ambag sa pagbubuo ng makataong lipunan.



Joel Saracho

Manggagawang Pangkultura at aktibista, naging News Director ng ABS-CBN News Channel (ANC) si Joel Saracho. Dalawampung limang (25) taon siyang naging journalist, bago naging ganap na artista sa tanghayan, telebisyon, at pelikula. Kasama siya sa mga nagtatag ng Aktor at sa kasalukuyan ay kasapi ng executive committee nito.

A MOWELFUND AT 50: BRINGING HOME THE GOLD FOR FILM WORKERS

The story goes that in the early seventies, the three acknowledged "Kings of Philippine Movies"—Fernando Poe, Jr. (FPJ), Joseph Estrada (Erap) and Dolphy (Pidol), went into a huddle to discuss how they could further help the film industry, particularly, its workers.

It was common knowledge that the trio were not only at the top of the heap—box-office and awards-wise—as actors, producers and filmdom's movers and shakers; their generosity, specially to the industry's rank and file, endearingly referred to as "*mga alipores*," was "legend."

BOOTS ANSON ROA-RODRIGO



First board

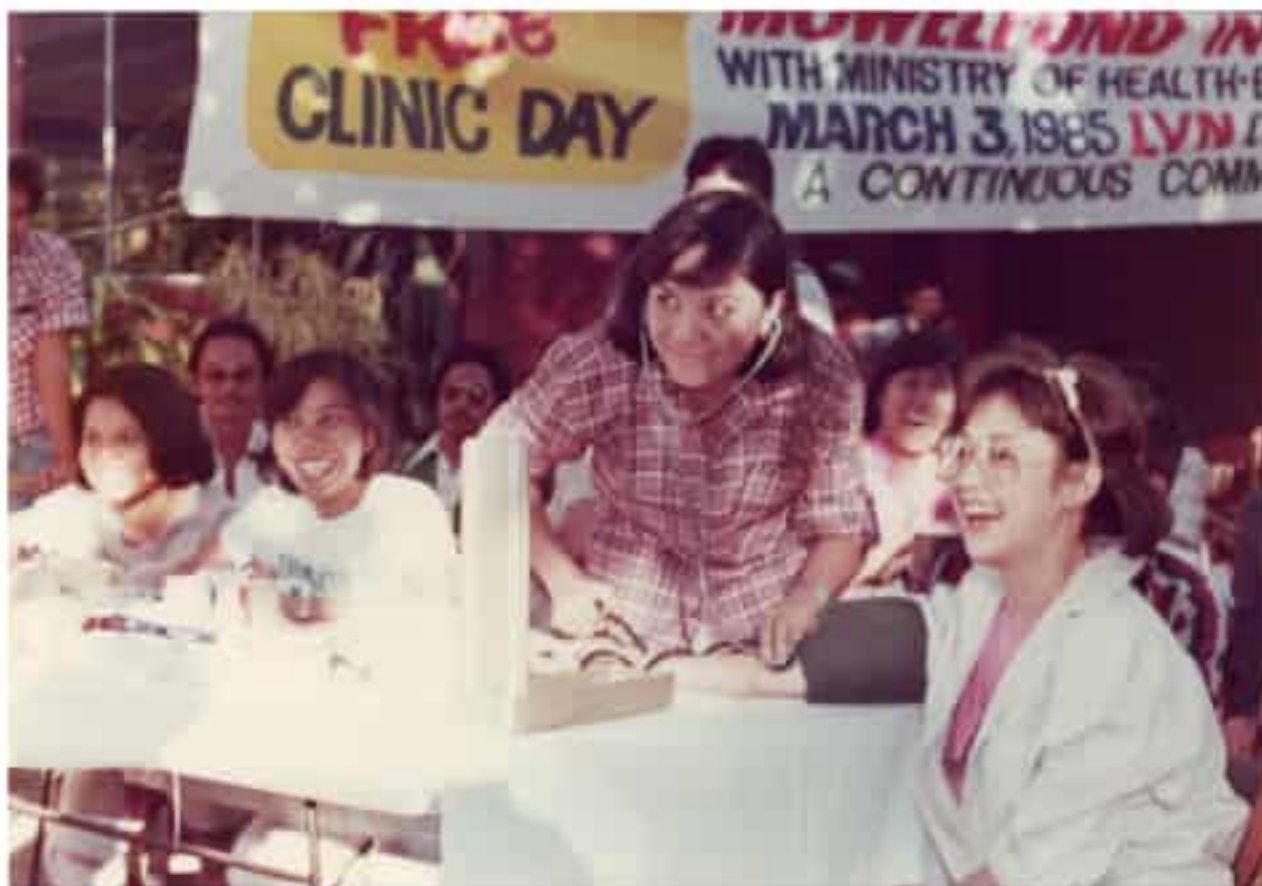
"KBL" (Kilusan ng Bagong Lipunan) was not only known at the time as Ferdinand Marcos, Sr.'s political party, it was also an acronym for "Kasal, Binyag, Libing (weddings, baptisms and funerals)." For the empowered and the enabled in politics, business and the movies (read: "moneyed"), KBL were social milestones that begged for their generosity.

For on- and off-camera heroes, FPJ, Erap and Pido, KBL constituted the breadth, depth and scope of their bounty. The contemporary term, "*bukas-palad* (open-handed)" was used early on to describe their magnanimity towards the marginalized in the industry. They consistently, and quietly, went the extra mile to mitigate the plight of the underpaid, underprivileged and the underemployed film workers.

It was on this significant consultation get-together that former President Joseph "Erap" Estrada, recommended that their charitable work, while it could still be continued on a personal basis, should be, on a larger scale, institutionalized. Thus, the birth of the Movie Workers Welfare Foundation (Mowelfund) in March, 1974.



First Mowelfund logo



Vilma Santos at 1985 free clinic



Mowelfund hospital assistance

With knowledge, experience, wisdom and resources pooled by the triumvirate, producers, legal luminaries and social workers, the Mowelfund Charter and By-laws were drawn and an office was established in Burke Building on Escolta.

Mowelfund's shortlisted pioneers, all "name-droppables," included Marichu Vera- Perez of Sampaguita Pictures, lawyer Manny de Leon of LVN, Cirio Santiago of Premiere Productions, Atty. Espiridion Laxa of Tagalog- Ilang-Ilang Productions, Director Eddie Romero, and reigning Philippine Movie Queen, producer and spouse of FPJ, Susan Roces, as well as erstwhile executive director, Rolfie Velasco.

The original mandate of Mowelfund was to provide health and general welfare benefits for the industry workers classified into "above the line" and "below the line" constituents.

"Above the line" comprised the creatives and administrative: Line producers, directors, script-writers, cinematographers, editors and musical directors. "Below the line" referred to associate producers, production assistants, sound and light engineers and technicians, make-up artists, wardrobe and art department heads.

Mowelfund was founded by Erap as a private, non-stock, nonprofit foundation headed by a Board of Trustees (BOT) for policy-making. For execution and implementation, the BOT administered an Executive Committee composed of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Executive Director and auditor.

As a Membership Foundation, Mowelfund was opened to film workers aged 25 to 55 years old who were actively working in the industry in a creative, technical or administrative capacity, and certified by their respective film productions. Then and now, film workers were contractual, assigned on a per project basis on a no-work, no pay arrangement. There being no employer-employee relations between them, Mowelfund issued the following annual benefits for members who paid yearly dues of 300 pesos (now increased to 500 pesos, with 400 pesos as renewal fee). The 400 pesos annual fee entitles the member to the following present benefits:

- Continuing medical reimbursements worth 8,000 pesos a year.
- Three hospitalizations a year at 8,000 pesos per hospitalization.
- One surgery a year at 13,000 pesos
- Death benefits amounting to 35, 000 pesos.
- Seasonal medical, social services and cash assistance and distribution of goods on Anniversaries and special events.
- Livelihood training and opportunities
- Low-cost housing provisions — 20 units already dwelled in by members in San Jose Del Monte.
- Cash educational assistance and school equipment for dependents of members

Members reaching the age of 70 and having paid continuously for 20 years are elevated to honorary membership. As such, they are exempt from dues, but continue to enjoy benefits and privileges.

An additional layer of membership has been introduced lately through AKTOR, a partner organization of actors and performing artists in the industry. Its founder and Chairman is leading actor and industry leader, Dingdong Dantes, who is also a Trustee of Mowelfund. AKTOR members pay a higher premium on membership in exchange for enhanced benefits.

The latest initiatives for membership privileges and benefits are geared towards the following:

- Future Exemption of membership fees of 500 pesos for 1,000 members
- Addition of insurance coverage or HMO
- PhilHealth benefits through its Konsulta program



- Partnership with Capitol Medical Center for medical services and clinic facilities
- Construction or acquisition of a clinic/ medical facility

In 1979, Mowelfund's Education Arm, the Mowelfund Film Institute (MFI) was founded to provide subsidized film education for its members, dependents, and the public at large. The MFI is best known for fostering the short and full-length, independent ("indie") film. It has discovered, trained and graduated renowned filmmakers like Surf Reyes, Nick de Ocampo, Lav Diaz, Brillante Mendoza, Raymond Red, Neil Daza, Mark Meily, Paolo Villaluna, Yam Laranas, Larry Manda, Sari Dalena, Rica Arevalo, Ellen Ramos, Ditsi Carolino and Mel Bacani.



1989 Christoph Janetzko Workshop

Presently, the MFI conducts regular, intensive, and masterclass workshops on the various phases of filmmaking like production, direction, editing, cinematography, script-writing, acting and music scoring.

It also sponsors seminars and teach-ins on various film related topics and issues.

It also ties up with animation, archiving, and leading film agencies—foremost of which is the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP)—in conducting film festivals and special events where it fields its experts and graduates.

The MFI houses a State of the Art 54-seat theater named after award-winning and legendary Cinematographer Ricardo "DengCar" Baltazar whose son, Jim Baltazar, sits on the Mowelfund Board and who is now the leading film equipment and production services supplier in and out of the country.

The MFI also offers a vast range of post production services like editing, scoring, color-grading, digitization, DCP conversion, through its DIGI-POST facilities.

Mowelfund's golden anniversary was highlighted by a mammoth medical and dental fair which offered free diagnostics, eye care, free medicines and health products, cash assistance and product give-aways, raffle of appliances and cash prizes and year end reports and inspirational from Mowelfund leaders and celebrity supporters.

Scholarship grants and awards for outstanding services to the industry were also conferred. Said AVP also acknowledged the tremendous work done by MOWELFUND department heads: Emma Mon-Alon, Administration and Finance; Joey Roa - Welfare; Ricky Orellana- Mowelfund Film Institute (MFI).

A Mowelfund commemorative book and anniversary documentary featuring film luminaries and industry leaders are ready for publication and screening.

Flagship projects include the construction of the Mowelfund Film Museum at the Quezon Memorial Convention Center with the support of Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte. A Partnership with Capitol Medical Center will highlight assistance for medical facilities and services for our members.

Mowelfund's subsistence is sourced from an annual share of 50% of net of amusement taxes collected by the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) under the auspices of the Metro Manila Development Authority.

Pursuant to a Presidential Decree by Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. in 1974, every December 25 until January 7 would mark the celebration of the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF), during which the local government units of Metro Manila would waive their amusement taxes. Further, only Filipino films are to be shown in cinemas for the two-week period.



**Boots Anson
Roa Rodrigo**

is a respected actress
and the Chairman of
the Movie Workers
Welfare Foundation, Inc.
(Mowelfund).



Last year, the MMFF yielded a P10.2 Million annual subsidy for Mowelfund. It was a generous amount which, however, covered only about 70% of total operational costs. The 30% balance was outsourced through donations and projects.

Mowelfund is grateful to the MMFF for its continuing support these past 50 years.

It has become the Foundation's lifeline to sustain benefits for some 4,000 beneficiaries, most of whom are now retired workers. For those who continue to ply their trade, they are beholden to the market demand for films and the patronage of cinema audiences which have begun to dwindle in the face of social media and its myriad platforms like streaming over YouTube and Netflix.

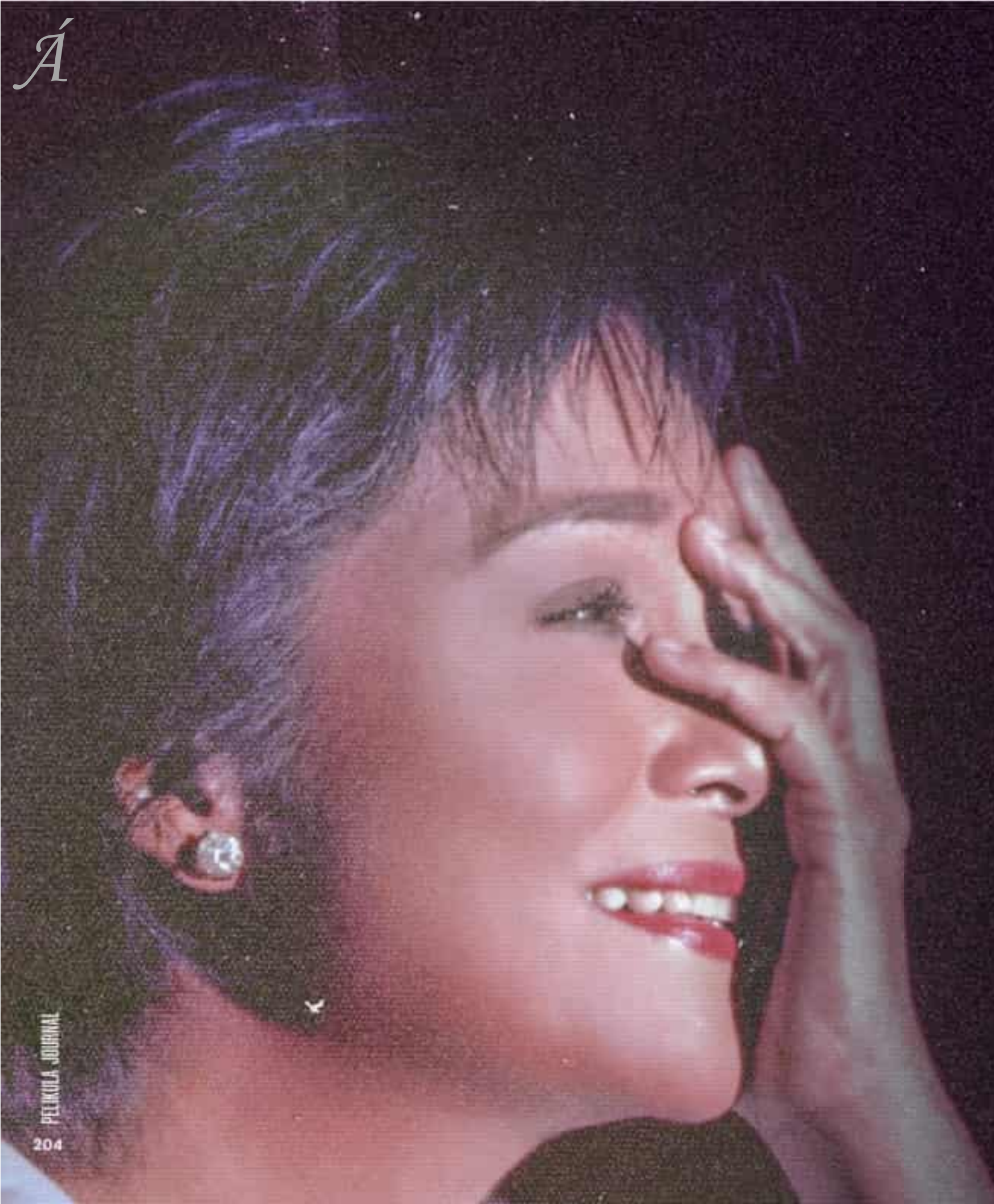
Meanwhile, wherever the film industry finds itself, Mowelfund fulfills its covenant with its members for continuing welfare and film education support.

Through peaks and valleys, Mowelfund, at 50, continues to "bring home the gold" for its marginalized workers, its *raison d'être*; its reason for being.

ALBERT SUNGA



The Greatest Performance of My Life



"Ang aking ina ang nagbigay sa akin ng buhay, pero ang hanging hinihinga ko ngayon ay nanggaling kay Nora Aunor."

Pabirong sinasabi ko, pero posibleng totoo, na since birth, Noranian na ako. Noranian ang nanay ko. Noranian ang tatay ko. Noranian ang komadronang nagpaanak sa nanay ko. Sinalubong ko ang mundong napapaligiran ng mga Noranian. Natural lamang siguro na maging Noranian ako.

Una kong alaala ng pagiging Noranian ay noong 1975, nine years old ako, fiesta sa Cabanatuan City, buong linggong may karnabal, at may nagtatanghal na mga artista at mang-aawit sa exhibit hall araw-araw. Pumasyal kami doon isang gabi — kasama ko si Nanay, si Tatay, at si Lucy, pinsan kong kaedad ko. Nagkataong special guests nang gabing iyon si Nora Aunor at si Christopher de Leon. Hindi namin iyon inaasahan. Fifty pesos ang bayad sa show, malaking halaga noon, kaya atubiling manood ang nanay ko. Pero nagpumilit ako. At dahil spoiled sa father, nasunod ang gusto ko. Late na kami nang makapasok sa venue. Napakaraming tao: noon lang ako nakakita ng ganoon-karaming tao. Karga ng mother ko si Lucy. Pasan naman ako sa balikat ng tatay ko. Nang tawagin si Nora, nag-stampede. May mga nag-akyat sa stage. Napilitan ang organizer na ihinto ang show dahil hindi makontrol ang crowd. Pinaulanan kami ng tubig mula sa fire truck. Nakabati lang sa mga tao sina Nora at Christopher, bago sila inilikas. Bago tumalikod si Nora, tumingin siya sa direksiyon namin. Sa batang isip ko, sa akin siya nakatingin, at tiyak kong siya ang nakita ko.

Pag-uwi namin sa bahay, sabi ko sa kanila, "Puwede na kong mamatay dahil nakita ko na si Nora."

"Magtigil ka nga sa sinasabi mo," sabi ni Nanay. Ayaw nilang nakita ko si Nora.

Di maalis-alis sa isip ko ang pangyayaring iyon. Sabi ko, balang araw, makikilala, mayayakap, at mahahalikan ko si Nora Aunor.

Sa Maynila ako nagkolehiyo, sa UE Recto. Agad akong nakatapos sa kolehiyo kahit hindi pag-aaral ang nasa isip ko nang una akong pumunta sa Maynila. Ang naisip ko: makikita ko na si Nora Aunor. Tatlong bagay ang gusto kong gawin kapag nakita si Nora: pumalakpak kapag kumanta siya, sumigaw kapag kumaway siya, at alayan siya ng bulaklak. Sa maikling salita, maging tipikal na tagahanga. Pupunta ako kung nasaan siya. Susuportahan ko ang mga pelikula niya at iba pang proyekto. Wala na sa isip ko ang pangarap ng aking kabataan. Kahit hindi ko na siya makilala o mayakap o mahalikan; sapat na sa akin ang maging simpleng tagahanga.

Nang mabalitaan kong gaganap si Ate Guy sa stage adaptation ng *Minsa'y Isang Gamugamo* naisip ko na ito na ang pagkakataon kong makita si Nora nang harapan, acting on stage. Hindi ko ito mapapalampas. Determinado akong panoorin ang stage-play sa loob ng apat na sunod-sunod na weekend. Working student ako noon, service crew sa Wendy's, pero hirap pa ring pagkasyahin ang suweldo sa mga gastos sa pag-aaral — bayad sa boarding house, meals, at school projects. Para makatipid, nilalakad ko lang mula UE Recto hanggang Rajah Sulayman Theater sa Fort Santiago. Nababawasan pa ang pera ko ng limang pisong entrance sa Fort Santiago. Noong ikatlong linggo, nakapunta pa rin ako sa Fort Santiago, pero kulang na ang pera ko para makabili ng ticket. Nakinig na lang ako sa labas. Kuntento na akong marinig ang boses ni Ate Guy.



Cut to 1995, naging member ako ng Grand Alliance for Nora Aunor, Philippines (GANAP). Nakilala ko si Edgar Castro, ang presidente ng GANAP at December 24, magkasama kami sa parada ng Metro Manila Film Festival. Naglalakad kami palapit sa float ng *Muling Umawit ang Puso* nang matanaw kami ni Ate Guy. Pinasakay niya kami ni Edgar sa karosa para umalalay sa kaniya. Sabi sa akin ni Ate Guy, "Kapag kumamay ako sa tao, yakapin mo ako sa bewang." Panay ang pakikipagkamay ni Ate Guy sa mga tao, pero hindi ko siya mahawakan sa bewang. Sa sinturera lang niya ako humahawak. "Huwag diyan," sabi ni Ate Guy. "Yakapin mo ako sa bewang."

After the parade, isinama ulit ako ni Edgar sa bahay ni Ate Guy sa Midland sa Ortigas. Ipinatawag ni Ate Guy si Edgar sa kuwarto niya sa third floor ng bahay. Hinila ako ni Edgar. Pagbukas ni Ate Guy ng pinto, parang nagulat siya na kasama ako.

"Si Albert po, bagong miyembro ng GANAP," sabi ni Edgar.

"Oo, kilala ko na si Albert. Kanina ayaw akong yakapin, ayaw akong hawakan."

Napayakap ako kay Ate Guy at humalik sa kaniyang pisngi.

"Sige, kumain muna kayo," sabi niya.

Pagtalikod ko kay Ate Guy, tumulo ang luha ko dahil sa realisasyon na natupad ang pangarap ng aking kabataan.

Taong 1998, panahon ng kampanya ni Ate Guy sa pagkagobernador sa Iriga. Nasa opisina niya kami sa General Marcelino St., Quezon City, nag-eempake ng bag of goodies na dadalhin sa Bicol. Tulong-tulong ang mga miyembro ng GANAP at Federation. Natapos kami bandang ala-una ng umaga. Itinawag ko kay Ate Guy nang matapos ang aming ginagawa.

"Magpahinga na kayo," sabi ni Ate Guy. "At pumunta ka rito sa bahay bukas." Alam kong mag-aabot siya ng token para sa volunteers.

Kinaumagahan, may tawag sa probinsiya. Nasagasaan ng motoraklo ang nanay ko. Dinala siya sa hospital.

"Sige," sabi ko sa kapatid ko, "Uuwi ako ngayon din."

Nataon namang pinapapunta ako ni Ate Guy sa bahay niya. Sabi ng personal assistant niyang si Gina na "Sabi ni Ma'am, dumaan ka muna rito bago ka umuwi sa probinsiya."

Pagdating ko sa bahay ni Ate Guy sa Balete, ang sabi niya, "Ano ang nangyari sa nanay mo? Kumusta na siya? Tumawag ka agad sa akin pagdating mo sa probinsiya. Gusto kong malaman agad ang kalagayan niya." Inabot niya sa akin ang isang envelope. Alam kong pera iyon.

"Ate Guy, wala na po akong time para ibigay ito sa volunteers."

"Para sa iyo 'yan," sabi ni Ate Guy. "Dalhin mo sa probinsiya."

Tumanggi ako, pero nagpumilit siya. "Magagalit ako sa iyo kapag hindi mo tinanggap," sabi niya. "Nariyan ang sasakyan. Ipapahatid kita sa Cabanatuan."

Pauwi ako sa probinsiya, isang sakay lang sa Baliwag Transit. Sa bus station na lang ako nagpahatid.

Sa bus, habang bumibiyahe pauwi, dalawang bagay ang laman ng puso ko. Una, pag-aalala. Ano ang daratnan ko sa probinsiya? Baka malubha ang nanay ko? Pangalawa, ang realisasyong mahalaga ako kay Ate Guy. Bumangon siya nang maaga. Sino ba naman ako? Ordinaryong member lang ako ng GANAP. Wala pa akong nagagawa kumpara sa mga naging presidente ng kaniyang mga fans club. Hindi ang halaga ng laman ng sobre, kundi ang pagpaparamdam niya sa akin na importante ako sa kaniya. Mahalaga ako sa aking idolo.

Mula noon, higit pang lumalim ang pagmamahal ko kay Nora Aunor. Pero pakikibaka rin ang pagmamahal sa isang Nora Aunor. Maraming pagsubok. Maraming tanong. Mga tanong na hindi mo alam ang sagot. Marami kang makakaaway, makakasamaan ng loob, masasakripisyo, kahit mahal sa buhay.



Maraming nagtatanong kung bakit kay rami kong isinakripisyo para kay Ate Guy. Ang sabi ko, hindi sakripisyo ang tawag ko doon kundi pagmamahal. Kapag ang isang bagay ay ginawa mo para sa taong importante sa iyo, pagmamahal iyon. Mahal ko si Nora Aunor, kaya ang ginagawa ko para sa kaniya ay pag-aalay ng pagmamahal. Kaligayahan kong mahalin siya. Hindi iyon sakripisyo.

May nagsabi na si Nora Aunor ay parang apoy, magandang pagmasdan sa malayo pero napapaso ang sinumang lumapit. Totoo, pero hindi ako napaso. Namagneto ako ng pagmamahal ko sa kaniya. Hindi naman ito bulag na pagmamahal dahil kapag mali, mali. Sinasabi ko sa kaniya. Kapag tama, tama.

Hindi na rin ako bata. Wala akong pamilya; hindi na ako mag-aasawa. Kapag matanda na at nakaupo na lamang sa tumba-tumba, masasabi kong fulfilled ako sa buhay. Aalalahanin ko lang ang pinagsamahan namin ni Ate Guy, ang lahat ng Nora Aunor memories ko. Iyon ang bubuhay sa akin.

Halaw sa aklat na "Si Nora Aunor sa mga Noranlan, Mga Paggunita at Pagtatapat." Nestor de Guzman, Parugot, Millares Publishing Inc. 2005



JOJO LIM

Vilma Santos

Idol For All Seasons



Mula 1971, 11 years old ako at namulat sa aming bahay na kapag Linggo at may pelikula si Vilma Santos ay nanonood kami ng mother ko, sister, mga pinsan at auntie sa Cubao. Madalas kami noon sa Grand Theater, Sampaguita, New Frontier, and Nation, at laging marami talagang tao sa sinehan. Naalala ko pa ang movie nila ni Bobot Mortiz and Jay Ilagan, *Inspirasyon* na idinirek ni Ishmael Bernal; *Aloha, My Love* ni Direk Maning Borlaza at marami pang iba.

Vilmanian ang pamilya ko at mga kamag-anak, kaya nagustuhan ko na rin si Vilma; at bumilib ako sa ganda niya, sa galing sa pag-arte at versatility sa mga roles na ginampanan niya, *Kampanerang Kuba*, *Darna de Noche*, *Hating-gabi na Vilma*, at iba pa. 1973 ay lalong tumibay ang paghanga ko kay Vilma nang mapanood ko siya sa *Lipad*, *Darna*, *Lipad*. Grabe ang dami ng tao, nagsara ang takilya at breaking box-office record at tumagal sa mga sinehan ng dalawang buwan; at tinalo pa ang movie ni FPJ.

Sinubaybayan ko na talaga si Vilma sa movies and TV shows at nagkolekta na ako ng mga magasin na siya ang cover. Tuloy-tuloy na ang pagiging Box-office Queen ni Vilma, naka-apat na Darna movies siya and naging *Dyesebel* pa. Si Vilma ang natatanging Movie Queen na nakapareha lahat ng icons ng kaniyang panahon: sina FPJ, Joseph Estrada, Dolphy, Eddie Rodriguez, Dindo Fernando, Chiquito, Tirso Cruz III, Boyet De Leon, at iba pa.

Sa sobrang paghanga ko kay Vilma, bukod sa kasama ko ang pamilya ko na manood ng movies niya, nanonod pa ulit ako mag-isa at inilikot ko talaga mga sinehan na showing ang pelikula niya mula Cubao, Makati, and sa Manila. Ang saya-saya ko na talagang pinipilahan sa mga sinehan ang movies niya, at noong 1978 sa Metro Manila Film Festival ang entry niya na *Rubia Servios* with Mat Ranillo III & Philip Salvador, directed by Lino Brocka, sa parada pa lang, inabangan ko na ang karosa ng *Rubia Servios* sa may Metropolitan Theater at nang makita ko siya ay lalo akong humanga sa ganda niya at napakaputi, palagi pang naka-smile. Hinabol ko talaga ang karosa niya hanggang Qulapo and panay kaway ko sa kaniya. Basang-basa na ako ng pawis hanggang makarating na ako sa may Central Market at tumigil ang karosa niya, nakalapit ako at isinigaw ko pangalan niya VILMAAAAA! Inabot niya ang kaniyang kamay at nakamayan ko siya. Wow, heaven talaga ang first time ko siyang makamayan.

December 31 sa Coronet Theater sa Cubao, nanood ulit ako ng *Rubia Servios*. Grabe ang haba ng pila mula sa takilya, pa-ikot sa may kanto ng Family Bank. Umaapaw ang tao sa loob ng sinehan, Standing Room Only. Paglabas ko, nagulat ako at napakahaba pa rin ng pila at na-realize ko na talagang si Vilma ang tunay na Movie Queen and Box-office Queen. Sa harap ng Coronet Theater, may lumapit sa akin at nagpakilalang Vilmanian, Manuel Nava ang name niya at member siya



ng Solid Vilmanians. Niyaya niya akong pumunta sa bahay ni Vilma sa Magallanes Village and talagang sumama ako. Sobrang excited ako na makita si Vilma sa malapitan. New Year's Eve na 'yon at nag-alala ako na hindi ako nakapagpaalam sa amin. Pagdating sa bahay ni Vilma sa Magallanes Village, ang daming bus at jeep sa kalsada — mga Vilmanians na maraming tao. Si Papa Santos (tatay ni Vilma), ang nag-aasikaso sa mga fans, ang daming pagkain and sinabi niya sa amin na si Vilma ay nasa party pa sa Malacañang. Super excited ako at mga 2am madaling araw na nang dumating ang Limousine at may mga police escort, bumaba si Vilma na naka-gown kasama rin si Marichu Maceda. Wow, super ganda ni Vilma at ipinakilala ako ni Manuel sa kaniya at nagkamay kami. Heaven!

Mula noon, naging member na ako ng Vilma Santos Solid Philippines, hanggang maging president na ako ng grupo hanggang ngayon, at ang grupo ay naging Vilma Santos Solid International dahil sa dami ng members namin here and abroad na sumusuporta kay Vilma maging sa showbiz man o sa politika. At sa dami na ng mga personal encounters ko sa kaniya, laio akong humanga sa ugali niya at sa sinseridad sa pakikitungo sa amin at sa ibang tao. Hindi niya kami itinuturing na fans kundi friends. Pag pumupunta kami sa shooting ng movie niya o sa TV shows niya ay lagi niya kaming binibigyan ng oras para makausap at magpa-picture at megaling ang

memory niya para matandaan ang mga pangalan namin kahit sa dami naming nga Vilmanians.

1977 Metro Manila Film Festival entry ni Vilma ang *Burlesk Queen* ni Direk Celso Ad Castillo na hinakot lahat ng awards at that time including Best Actress. Ito rin ang pagsisimula ng pagiging daring niya as an actress. Naging aware na si Vilma sa pagpili ng script at movies na gagawin niya na kailangan ay makabuluhan at may matutuhan ang moviegoers at mga fans niya. 1978 ay nag-produce siya ang classic na *Pagputi ng Uwak Pag-itim ng Tagak*, dinirek ni Celso Ad Castillo. Nakasama niya si Charito Solis sa *Modelong Tanso*. 1980 ang *Langis at Tubig* ni Direk Danny Zialcita. *Miss X* ni direk Gil Portes. *Hiwalay, Karma*, at 1982 ang *Relasyon* ni Ishmael Bernal na nagbigay kay Vilma ng first ever Grand Slam Best Actress, nanalo siya sa lahat ng award giving bodies. Sa ngayon hawak ni Vilma ang record na 4-time Grand Slam Best Actress para sa *Relasyon*, *Dahil Mahal Kita: Dolzura Cortez Story*, *Bata Bata Paano ka Ginawa?*, at *Dekada '70*.

There's no stopping Vilma pagdating sa awards and box-office hits na mga pelikula: *Sinasamba Kita*, *Gaano Kadalas ang Minsan*, *Broken Marriage*, *Paano ba ang Mangarap?*, *Adultery Alda Macaraog Case 7892*, *Sister Stella L*, *Alyas Baby Tsina*, *Tagos ng Dugo*, *Saan Nagtatago ang Pag-ibig?*, *Pahiram ng Isang Umaga*, *Hahamakin Lahat*, *Kopag Langit ang Humatol*, *Ipagpatawad Mo*,

VILMA SANTOS Winner!

Dahil Mahal Kita: Dolzura Cortez Story, Bata Bata Paano Ka Ginawa?, Anak, Dekada '70, at Ekstra.

Vilma Santos' body of works is really outstanding! Her versatility is tops. 'Yan ang hinangaan ko sa kaniya: puwede siyang madre, burlesk dancer, kabit, AIDS victim, ekstra sa pelikula atbp.

Hindi lang sa showbiz ko hinangaan si Vilma gano'n din sa pagpasok niya bilang public servant sa Batangas: 9 years bilang Mayor, 9 years bilang Governor, at 6 years bilang Congresswoman. 24 years of service sa Batangas, at kaya naman ginawaran siya ng Malacañang ni President Benigno "Noy" Aquino III, ng highest government service award: ang Gawad Lingkod Bayan.

Saksi ako sa pagtulong niya sa mga projects para sa Batangas, roads, hospitals, cooperative, pangkabuhayan para sa mahihirap, schools at marami pang iba. At bilang Vilmanians, tumutulong din kaming mga members here and abroad sa pag-donate ng school bags, notebooks, computers, mga pang-dental at medical mission, pagbigay ng relief goods sa tao kapag binabagyo at/o pumutok ang Taal Volcano. Pati kaming Vilmanians, natuto sa pakikipag-kapwa tao at pagtulong sa mga nangangailangan.

Dahil kay Vilma, hinahamon ako na maging isang mabuting taong ipinaglalaman ang kaniyang karapatan (tulad ng sa Sister Stella L) at panatilihin ang pagmamahal at nakausat sa pamilya (tulad ng sa Anak at Bata Bata Paano Ka Ginawa?).

Dahil kay Vilma, hindi lang ako magiging tagahanga kundi isang mabuting tao at kapaki-pakinabang at may malasakit na Pilipino.

Si Vilma Santos ang nagsisilbing inspirasyon sa akin at sa marami nating kababayan.

Si Vilma Santos ang aking huwaring tutularan at susuportahan sa pagiging artista man o lingkod bayan.





A



Shooting the Tiyanak

For Sir Noel Ferrer

It was '88 and I was seven—*Tiyanak* shot in Supreme,
or was it Rivoli—one of those old cinemas tucked between streets.
Fog like wet paper on the screen, heavy enough to tear,
and they said, if you listened close, you'd hear baby cries long after.
My lola swore she did, her hand gripping mine—
I wanted to believe.

Fast-forward ten years—senior high school,
and that place cast shadows of another kind.
Flickers of bodies pressed close, outlines shifting,
light slipping through cracks like whispers.
I sat there, breath tight, half-drawn to the exit, half-stuck—
the shadows inside stretched long, waiting.
Darkness rippled behind the seats, something stirred,
the tiyanak maybe, or maybe—
just me, raw with wanting and wretchedness.

Another ten, maybe twenty years later—
I stopped counting, and the city seemed to shrink.
The streets seemed narrower, or maybe it was just me,
again, filling the spaces I used to slip through.
I walked, trying to trace where it stood, the cinema—
gone, or perhaps it was never there,
maybe it had crumbled while I was away.
The memory slipped—like rain on cameras, pooling,
then falling apart.

On the bus back to Manila,
I searched for *Tiyanak*, promised to download it later,
but the thought flickered—lost in the city signal.
And when I looked out the window, the fog rolled in—
not thick, just there, like something that waited,
like a target, like an old hand still holding on.

Memory was like that—things disappeared, people,
like monsters, like the old moviehouses that vanished
when you turned away.

That was the real horror, wasn't it?

The forgetting.

Or the remembering—what had been buried under the seats,
the fear we carried home, the bullet lodged inside,
the lives we leave behind.



Edgar Calabia Samar

is an award-winning writer and Associate Professor at Ateneo de Manila University, where he chairs the Department of Filipino. He has received numerous distinctions for his work in poetry, short stories, children's literature, criticism, essays, and novels, including the Palanca Memorial Awards, the National Book Awards, the National Children's Book Awards, and the NCCA Writers' Prize. He served as a Visiting Professor at Osaka University from 2017 to 2022 and was a writer-in-residence at the International Writing Program of the University of Iowa in 2010. He is currently the Vice Head of the National Committee on Literary Arts of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. He is also a member of national organizations such as the Filipino Institute of Translation (FIT) and a former president of *Linang sa Imahen, Retorika, at Anyo (LIRA)*. Follow his IG: @ecssamar.

Matapos Panoorin ang Ulan

At sabi mo, bigla:

Paano kung may utak ang puso,
dalawa ang ulo, dalawa ang katawan.

Hindi dalawa ang puso, tulad sa kanta
na excuse lamang para sa mga salawahan.

Sa panganorin, nagbabatang umulan,
nais ko sariang hintayng bumuhos ang ulan
bago ka sagutin para magkaroon
ng mas akmaang background ang sagot ko
sa tanong mo na walang kasagutan.

Parang sa ffj 18 (5, 20), si Nadine, sa waiting shed,
habang kasama si Carlo.

Hindi ako si Nadine.
Hindi ikaw si Carlo.
Hindi pelikula ito dahil naglalakad
nga tayo at inisip ko, tang'nal
nakalimutan kong magdala ng payong!

Habang ang inaalala mo,
paano kung may utak ang puso?
Paano kung dalawa ang ulo?
Paano kung may katawan?

Ako at ikaw ang puso.
Ikaw at ako ang katawan.

Sabi ko, bilisan mo, gagol!

Hinawakan kita sa braso at tumakbo tayo
dahil ayaw kong mabasâ ng ulan.

Pero hindi tayo ang tumakbo.
Ako lang.
Paglingon ko, naiwan kang tila tuod
na natigmak sa tubig at unti-unting
inuusbungan ng mga sanga at dahon.

Dala-dala ko ang braso mo habang
tumatakbo pauwi sa bahay.
Walang lingunan.

Missing JLC

Kung ang pelikula ay sining, ano't nauulit
ang mga tauhan na ginagampanan mo? —

Kailangan mong pakiligin ang mga tao,
Sa bansang ito na laging uhaw sa pag-ibig.

Marahil, inisip mo, kilig na lamang ba
Ang kaya kong ibigay sa mundo?

Nilisan mong saglit ang puting tabing
Para kalingain ang sariling sining.

Naghihintay kaming muli kang magbalik
Na bitbit ang pag-ibig na lagpas sa kilig.



Jerry B. Gracio

Si Jerry B. Gracio ay makata
at manunulat para sa
pelikula at telebisyon.
Kabilang sa kaniyang
mga parangal ang UP
Centennial Prize for
Literature at ang Southeast
Asia Writers (SEAWrite)
Award sa Bangkok.



JERRY GRACIO

MMFF 50 : ANOTHER GOLDEN YEAR OF PHILIPPINE CINEMA

NOEL D. FERRER

The METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL (MMFF) was created by virtue of Presidential Proclamation Nos. 1459, 1485, 1533, 1533-A, 1647 and MMC Executive Order No. 85-04 and 86-09 which declares an annual festival for the exclusive showing of Filipino films in movie theaters nationwide, free from foreign competition, from December 25 up to January 4 of the following year, being extended until January 7.

Over the years, the festival has become a tradition for many Filipinos, who eagerly anticipate the screening of new and exciting films during the holiday season without competition from foreign titles.

THE METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL IS NOT AN ALL-ART FILM FESTIVAL. Through the years, it went through several versions — until it maintained its unique selling proposition — which is implemented by the present EXECOM — it being a film festival that caters to all the members of the Filipino Family during the Christmas Season.

The Selection Committee makes sure that we have a good mix of entries every year to feature films of different genres evaluated on a standard that balances film excellence and commercial viability.

So true to our objectives- the MMFF is here 1) to help in the promotion and development of the local film industry and 2) to raise revenues for its designated beneficiaries from the local movie industry.

The MMFF is managed by an Executive Committee with the MMDA Chairman as the Overall Chairman and assisted by different sub-committees in the implementation of the various programs and activities of the MMFF.

In the 50 years of the MMFF, it has initiated efforts like the New Wave Cinema section, the Student Short Film Caravan, Film Master Classes, the Covid Vaccination and Pandemic Support Program, the Subsidy for International Film Festivals for the Best Picture winners, and most recently, the Multi-Agency Serbisyo Fair for all the members of the entertainment industry.

Katulad ng dalawa pang film festivals — Cinemalaya at QCinema na namamayagpag at may suporta ng gobyerno, ang Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) ay patuloy na naghahanap ng balanse — kung ano ang sining at tatangkilikin ng manonood na Filipino.

May mas malaking kontekstong ginagalawan ang daigdig ng pelikula kung kaya't ang mga lahok sa MMFF ay magandang ibangga sa mga hamon ng panahon — at sa huli'y magbubunyi tayo dahil, sa kabila ng napakaraming hamon at pagsubok, ang mga ito'y naligpawan at napagtatagumpayan ng mga nagsusulong ng pelikulang Filipino:

- Noong 1970s - Ang pamamayani ng pelikulang mula sa Hollywood; ngunit naging Golden Age naman ng Philippine Movies
- Noong 1980s - Ang paglaki ng Amusement Taxes; ang isyu ng piracy; at ang mga temang politika sa pelikula na nakapaloob sa mga personal at panlipunang issue
- Noong 1990s - Naging sobrang commercialized ang mga pelikulang Filipino. Namamayani ang mga film franchises ng mga big box-office stars
- Taong 2000 - Ang unti-unting lumalakas na Independent Cinema sa bansa
- Taong 2015 - Revolution — isang pagbabagong anyo ng MMFF
- Taong 2017 - Isang ingklusibong pagyabong ng MMFF, naghahanap na ng middle ground sa mga indie at mainstream productions
- Taong 2018 - Pag-set ng bagong record sa box office
- Taong 2019 - Isang malakas na puwersa sa industriya ang MMFF, nagpanukala ng Summer MMFF
- Mula 2020-2021 - Pag-aangkop ng MMFF sa Covid Pandemic

- Taong 2022 - Balik Saya, Balik Pelikula
- Taong 2023 - Summer MMFF at maraming quality entries na nag-break pa ang box office records
- Taong 2024 - Countdown to the Golden Year and bringing MMFF to the World via the Manila International Film Festival (MIFF)

Kung kritikal man tayo sa ibang naging pelikula sa MMFF, 'yon ay dahil may sense tayo ng kung ano ang maganda sa pelikulang Filipino — at marami diyan — galing din sa MMFF. Nandiyan ang mga gawa ng mga National Artists — *Ganito Kami Noon, Paano Kayo Ngayon, Himala, Insiang, Ang Panday, Ina Ka Ng Anak Mo, Brutal, Moral, Jose Rizal, Muro Ami, Andrea, Paano Ba Ang Maging Isang Ina, Bulaklak Ng City Jail, Bona...* hanggang sa mga tulad ng *Kisapmata, Shake, Rattle and Roll, May Minamahal, Kasal Kasali, Kasalo, Tanging Yaman, Sunday Beauty Queen, Die Beautiful, Kung Maupay It Panahon, Ang Larawan, FanGirl, About Us But Not About Us*, and the recent award winning films na *Firefly* at *GomBurZa* pati na ang box office champion na *Rewind* at marami pang iba.

At sa ika-50 edisyon ng MMFF, sampung de-kalidad na entries ang aabangan natin:

- **And The Breadwinner Is...**, a drama-comedy starring Vice Ganda and Eugene Domingo, directed by Jun Lana.
- **Green Bones**, starring Dennis Trillo and Ruru Madrid, directed by Zig Dulay.
- **Strange Frequencies: Haunted Hospital**, starring Jane de Leon and Enrique Gil, directed by Kerwin Go.
- **Himala: Isang Musikal**, a reimagined musical by Pepe Diokno, starring Alcelle Santos and Bituin Escalante.
- **The Kingdom**, starring Vic Sotto and Piolo Pascual directed Mike Tuviera.
- **My Future You**, a romance starring Francine Diaz and Seth Fedelin, or jointly called "FranSeth." The movie is directed by Crisanto Aquino.
- **Uninvited**, a family-thriller directed by Dannie Villegas, starring Aga Muhlach, Vilma Santos, and Nadine Lustre.
- **Topak**, an action movie directed by Richard Somes, featuring Julia Montes and Arjo Atayde.
- **Hold Me Close**, a romance movie starring Julia Barreto and Carlo Aquino, directed by Jason Paul Laxamana.
- **Espantaho**, a horror film by Chito S. Roño featuring Judy Ann Santos and Lorna Tolentino.

Tuloy ang taunang parada sa December 21, at ang Gabi Ng Parangal sa December 27.

Seguradong may kuwentong MMFF tayong lahat!

Hangga't tinatangkilik ng mga Filipino ang mga pelikulang inihahain natin, mayroon tayong dapat matutuhan sa mga ito tungkol sa ating sarili at sa lipunan.

Kahit sa pagtaas o pagbaba ng bilang ng mga manonood natin — may matututuhan din tayo.

Natuto rin tayong mag adapt sa streaming — kaya't nag-MMFF na online na rin.

Patuloy tayong tumutuklas ng paraan upang maparami pa ang ating hanay, hindi dapat mag-away, bagkus maging daan para maghati-hati pa at maging eksklusibo.

Dahil sa mismong konsepto ng FESTIVAL — Pista ito na dapat — sama-sama, masaya, nagtutulungan, pampamilya... kaya nga pinag-iipunan, para maengganyo ang mga matatanda man o bata, anuman ang social class na pinanggalingan, anumang kasarian, o inabot na antas sa pag aaral.

Ituloy lang nating hikayatin ang mga Filipino na manood ng mga pelikula sa ating mga festivals at sama-sama pa rin nating hubugin ang mga pistang ito sa anyo at direksiyong nais nating patungahan: ang paglikha ng mga pelikulang sabay na umaantig, sumusuri, at lumilikha ng pagbabago sa ating sarili at lipunan.



Noel D. Ferrer

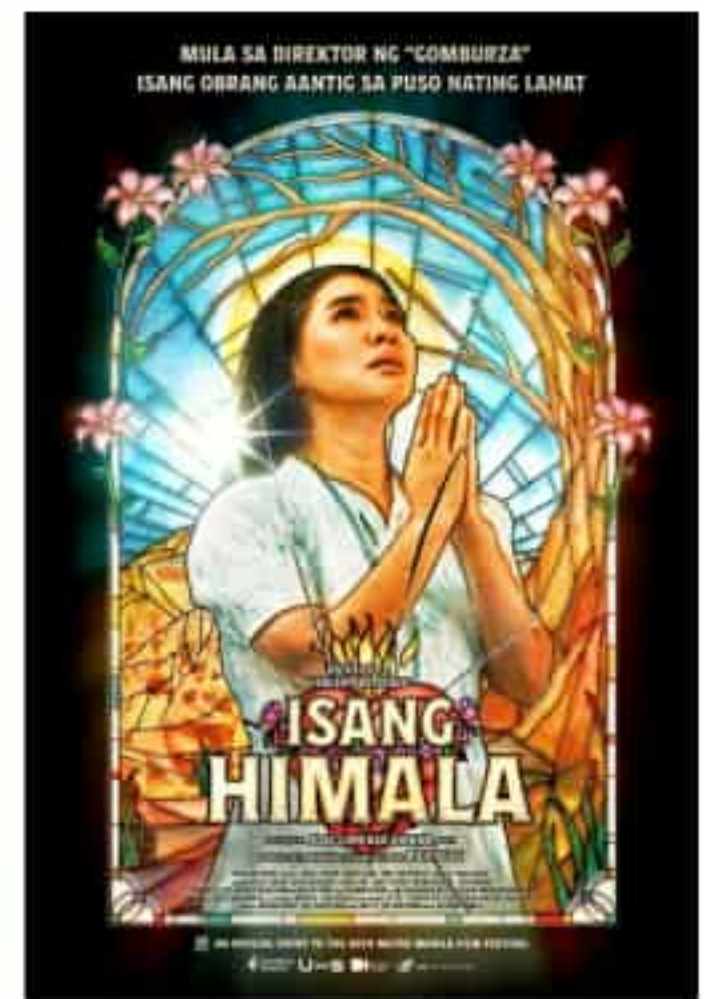
is a respected writer, critic, educator, talent manager and a film, television, resort, theater and concert events producer and an award-winning broadcaster. He is a philosophy graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University where he took his Masters in Communication Arts. He lectures in literature and media studies at the Department of English and Filipino and Communication Arts in the ateneo as well as in UP Diliman. He is part of the planning and widely followed Polytechnic Entertainment Portal and is involved in various print and broadcast writing projects including his bestselling book *BIKATIN AND Your Guide To Making Your Mark in Showbusiness* by Anis Publishing and his award-winning radio and online program *LEVEL UP in Radio-Inquirer* until it closed down and in *Radio Kalipunan* thereafter.

Noel serves as the Executive Director for the longest and long-running local festival - the Metro Manila Film Festival, the Project Director of SUDL National Music Awards at the National Commission of Culture and The Arts and one of the curators of the award-winning and pioneering Pinoy Playlist Music Festival.

Regarded as one of the most influential and excellent media practitioners by David Tangco, the Guild of Educators, Mentors and Students agency the other award-giving institutions. Noel rightfully earned his moniker as a multi-awarded, multi-media guru.

Noel Ferrer is the guest editor of this Pelikula Journal, Santelmo II issue.

50TH Metro Manila Film Festival





Mark Justiniani

studied painting at the University of the Philippines and works across various media, including canvas, assemblages, sculptures, and immersive installations. His art explores the intersection of reality and imagination, creating environments that challenge perceptions of space and time while inviting audiences to find the extraordinary within the mundane. He won the grand prize in the 7th Metrobank National Painting Competition, is a CCP 13 artist awardee, and received the Juror's Choice Award at the 1999 Philippine Arts Awards. A member of artist collectives like Salingpasa, ABAY, and Sanggawa, his works have been featured in significant exhibitions, including the 2nd Asia Pacific Triennial, Yokohama Triennial, Bangkok Art Biennale, and Children's Biennales at the National Gallery Singapore and the Japanese Palais in Dresden. His immersive solo exhibitions are at the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019 and the just concluded Void of Spectacles at Alencio Art Gallery in Manila.

FERRER AREVALO
VILLALUNA VALDELLON
VILLASIS LIONGOREN
KATIGBAK ALJAMA
DOMINGO FLORES
ALMARIO TIONGSON
BARRIOS DIOKNO
GIMATU LEE REYES
ROMERO DIAZ-ABAYA
LAGUESTA LIBIRAN
DAVID ABRAHAN
SAMAR DELA CRUZ
YUSON SARACHO
ROA-RODRIGO SUNGA
LIM ARCELLANA
JUSTINIANI GRÁCIO