

terms of survival, politics and sex. It was Joey Reyes who came along and gave it the inspired title. He phoned it in and I did a physical double take. It was so neat and so clever and worked on so many levels.

You must remember that I tried selling *Oro*...rather, *The Jungle Story* for five years, to every producer from Armida (Siguion-Reyna) to Mother Lily and everybody in between. In retrospect, it must have been the title. But anyway, when Marilou (Diaz Abaya) told me to dust off our dream projects because the Experimental Cinema of the Philippines (ECP) was holding this contest and then I won it, it was as if God had touched me on the forehead and my wish was granted. I was going to be able to do the movie I wanted to do in the way I wanted to do it, using all these people who had come along with me, some of them for longer than ten years, experimenting with improvisational acting, and working on the edge of the show biz envelope for the longest time. It was a wish that was granted with a 2.5 million peso price tag. That's like being given 40 million pesos to do your favorite Alternative Wet Dream now.

It was only in the 90s when I got fat and old that I would sit in the forests of Atimonan or the moonlit rice paddies of Malolos alive with slithering *dahong palay* waiting for the shot to be set up that I would wonder how many movies I had left in me. How many good movies I had left.

Is there a movie you regret having made? Not having made?

No regrets about having made any of the movies I did make. I think I have a nicely balanced collection of dramas, action, fantasy and horror. I don't regret not having made comedies *per se*, because although I am a riot in madcap comedy, if I may say so myself, it just wouldn't sell in a Philippine market. I reserved comedy for the theater and TV when I used to do TV. I just wish I had more time to do the horror movies that I did. They had the smallest budgets, and now that I watch them in reruns, it shows. But I think that the cinematics and the ideas in there are things I can be proud of.

I don't regret not having made *Ang Babaeng Hulk*. But I surely regret the fact that I never was able to get a producer to do the *Noli* and the *Fili*. I would have given my right arm (and all my children's right arms) to have been able to do that.

I have two projects that are really close to my heart: *Nang Taong Naging Blonde Ang Mga Pinoy* and *Ligawan Sa Panahon ng Tagasibol At Digmaan* that I would give my left arm for, but apparently there is no market for a Peque Gallaga left arm.

How do you feel about movie critics?

We practically don't have any. We have a lot of reviewers, but no critics. They know that one shouldn't judge film the way one judges literature. That's what they learn in all their seminars so they *say* it a lot, but they don't understand it. Our reviewers are number one: terribly lazy and number two: invested with a lot of *attitude*. They say things like, "I found the acting to be *alright*" and "the editing was *good*" and you never know what they mean by these things.

They have no sense of history and you can read their agendas if you know what group of "critics" they belong to. Films talk to us in a certain film code—call it cliché, if you will, but that's the way it works. Filipino film code will always portray the farmer as an Amorsolo farmer: *camisa chino* bought at Central Market (blue, green, maroon or white) and pretty usually, brand new. They eat *camote*, never *talbos ng camote*, papaya or Pinoy fruits that they can pick from the trees, little fish from little rivers and a lot of soups. . .you NEVER see soups being eaten in Pinoy films! This is standard fare if you see a Brocka or an O'Hara film. It is not wrong. It is a code. I may have used a cheap example, but let it stand.

Now it is the work of real critics to rise above the kind of movie codes that there are. This way they can identify the directors who work within the code in order to achieve a certain effect as opposed to the directors who are victims of these codes...prisoners of the Very Sneaky and Subversive Cliche.

And I don't know of any reviewer who really understands good cinematography, editing, music and production design. Many of them still spout the tired old saw that good music as well as good cinematography must not be noticed. I don't know how that works in their minds since it is their job to notice these things in the first place. And they wouldn't ever know good production design if it fucked them in the mouth.

Much of Pinoy cinema is judged by its intent. All a film has to do is to announce that it is going to do a story on "social injustice", the "despair of poverty", the "division of the classes" and all the favorite socialist catchwords that most of the older batch of critics (who also serve as judges) are fond of...support your intentions by casting Nora, Gina and/or Jaclyn (all wonderful artists of the first caliber) and line up your Usual Suspects in terms of Script and Cinematography (fill in the blanks, why don't you?) and you've got a nominated film. So much so that we have a joke that only in the Philippines is there a Cinema of Intent.

The people who make good reviewers are people like Marilou Diaz Abaya, Joey Reyes and Don Escudero, who really know their movies. But