

they are directors already. So, like, reviewing would be a step down the Food Chain. I'm not being facetious. The tragedy of a lot of film criticism in the Philippines is that it is being done by Mass Com teachers and others who desire to be directors. Much of their work is characterized by how *they* would have handled a cinematic problem. This is a real tragedy because no real interchange is going on and directors are not learning from disinterested parties who really love movies as an end in itself.

There's a teacher from a well-known Mass Com program from one of the Top Three who was given his break to do a movie. He chose to do a comedy. It was pathetic. Aside from the filmic elements, he couldn't even stage a believable action of somebody losing his pants while walking. Something as simple as that was completely beyond his expertise.

In the end, I have no respect for Filipino movie reviewers. They don't work as hard as we do.

Why haven't you made a movie in a while?

Because I'm bored with the *status quo*. The producers nowadays are so pusillanimous. They think a good movie project is something that they can make *tipid* on. The whole idea of going to a movie is to see something that you've never seen before! You have to pay in order to make people want to pay to see your film.

Because everything has been so codified, especially by ABS CBN, that all the new actors all look alike! I can't tell one from another. The last interesting new face on the screen was Claudine Barretto, and how long ago was that? But that's not a truly Pinoy phenomenon. Look at American TV. All the young actors all look the same: from *Roswell* to *Smallville*, *Buffy* to *Grosse Pointe*. They, like their Philippine counterparts, all look processed, packaged and pasteurized. But not necessarily in that order.

Because I'm too old and too tired to make the pitch. People who want to be directors don't know that an integral part of their job is to pitch the project to the producer. Pitching your movie has nothing to do with directing, but you won't get to direct your movie if you don't sell it. Selling it, no matter how good your project is, means saying the words that the target producer wants to hear. There is no formula to this piece of sales talk. The Mother Lily you face today has different needs than the Mother Lily you will face tomorrow.

Because I don't want to do another bold film again. I've run out of positions as well as psychological justifications. And it keeps those pusillanimous producers afloat with a false sense of security that they are really making movies.

You would make a helluva musical. Where is it?

Thanks. I take that as a real compliment. Where is it? Not in Philippine movies. Bernal warned me about it... nobody ever made a Pinoy musical and made it at the box office. Check your history. Now that I'm doing a lot of theater, I'm waiting for the right mix of collaborators.

You used to work with the same team in all your movies. What happened to the old gang (Don Escudero, Lore Reyes, Uro de la Cruz, etc.?)

I miss them so badly it hurts. It's just the nature of things. We all spiral upwards and we all ended up directing. For some reason, that directing thing...that mystique is a piece of shit. It stops you from doing things you would really enjoy doing. When I became a director, there was a movie that Bernie (Ishmael Bernal) was going to do. It was such a wonderful project that I immediately volunteered to production design it for him. When push came to shove, all my directorial "assignments" got in the way of working with Bernie. That was so stupid of me.

Speaking of Don, Lore and Uro...it was no accident we worked so well together. We are all inventive cooks so you can imagine the planning sessions. AND after shooting especially on location.

You said something to the effect that Prozac has made you a kinder, gentler director. How has this changed your films?

When you direct, you are three fourths of the time in a state of siege so you quickly slip into a siege mentality. Everyone out there has the potential to screw you, your time, your actors and your budget. And if they have the potential, they certainly are going to go out and screw you. So you're constantly raging, literally, against "the dying of the light".

When you take Prozac you tend to step back and see the bigger picture. You begin to "understand" the others and that you are not God's Anointed, out doing His task. You begin to give in. In the end, I don't think it's beneficial to the process or to the project itself because you end up understanding others and nobody is out there understanding your project. I have since stopped Prozac, but not because of movies. I certainly miss the intensely obsessive cinematic quality of its dreams, however.

I think movies are made in the teeth of madness. As I reread this interview I am struck by the amount of times I refer to "craziness", "being nuts", "are you out of your mind?" and just general insanity. But I think that is the process of moviemaking...dancing in the teeth of insanity.