

### Why did you never direct the superstars: Nora Aunor, Vilma Santos or Sharon Cuneta?

I like to work intensely six days out of seven, if not seven out of seven so that the role and the person merge within the camera. This happened most dramatically when we did *Cebu, The Series*. We were all together at the hotel and on the set in Cebu for one whole month. The effect was amazing.

Although I directed Nora in *Bad Bananas: Sa Puting Tabing*, it really wasn't her movie. I also directed Nora and Vilma in *Champoy* TV specials. Sharon and I worked together in McDonald's commercials. They are great people and fantastic artists. But they are superstars. And when you work with superstars, in the end it's all about their schedules. It's not their fault. It's whatever stupid studio manager ever invented *lagare* in the late fifties or sixties. I spit on his grave, whoever he or she is.

### You're also an actor. What were your best and worst performances?

Ironically, the two performances that made a real dent in the National Consciousness, and I mean that literally, was my pompous-ass asshole Archbishop in *Rizal* and my San Pedro in *Lucio and Miguel*. It's funny, but that was not the way I chose to play those parts and thank God I listened to my directors Marilou (Diaz Abaya) and Boots (Plata), respectively. They wanted me to play it that way and if I learned one thing as a director, it is to trust your director. If I have a modicum of fame as an actor, my directors really put me on the map.

The two performances I am proudest of: Christopher de Leon's gay friend in *Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos* and Mark Gil's hippie father in *Rock 'n Roll*. Mario O'Hara showed me the *Tatlong Taon* script and I told him that there was no way I was going to memorize a long speech towards the end. He promised me that he was going to do it in short cut-to-cuts. But something told me not to trust him, so I stayed the whole week in Majayjay learning the speech phonetically because at the time I didn't know a straight sentence in Tagalog.

Sure enough, when we shot the scene, which was this scene between Nora Aunor and myself, he said, "Action" and never cut. Adrenaline carried it for me and I did it in the first take. I was too astonished to be angry at him. When I drove home to Manila from Majayjay, I sang aloud all the way. I was so proud of that scene.

I enjoyed *Rock 'n Roll* by Maryo J. de los Reyes. We shot it in Baguio: a father and son scene on a mountainside by a fire, Mark and I sharing a bottle of real gin. Mark is telling me everything that's going wrong with his

life and I, like the stupid self-absorbed hippie that I was supposed to be, just kept saying "That's good" at appropriate times. I thought that was a wonderfully written scene, and of course, Mark is so good that it was easy and really enjoyable to do.

No director has ever offered me a second role after the first one. Which is a valid reason for paranoia.

### What would the *Oro, Plata, Mata* sequel be like?

I am on the psychological brink of shooting a movie in the same mansion as in *Oro*. Actually it's more of memory piece from the *Plata* portion of *Oro*. . .the same hacienda and the same wartime environment. But after 20 years and ten years of Prozac, it's an older, gentler and kinder—dare I say—a more loving treatment of family under dire circumstances. It wouldn't be strictly a sequel.

But we always had plans for a sequel. Since *Oro* is an elegy to the loss of Spanish influence on Philippine life, the natural thing was to pick up one character—the accountant of Don Claudio who becomes a guerilla leader—and follow him through Reconstruction. The hoarding, the Black Market and the blossoming squatter explosion which had its origins in World War II. Of course we would retain the major mahjong sessions, but this time it would be the men who would be playing.

It would be an epic story of the slow beginning of a Philippines run like hell by Filipinos.