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Autor/es:  
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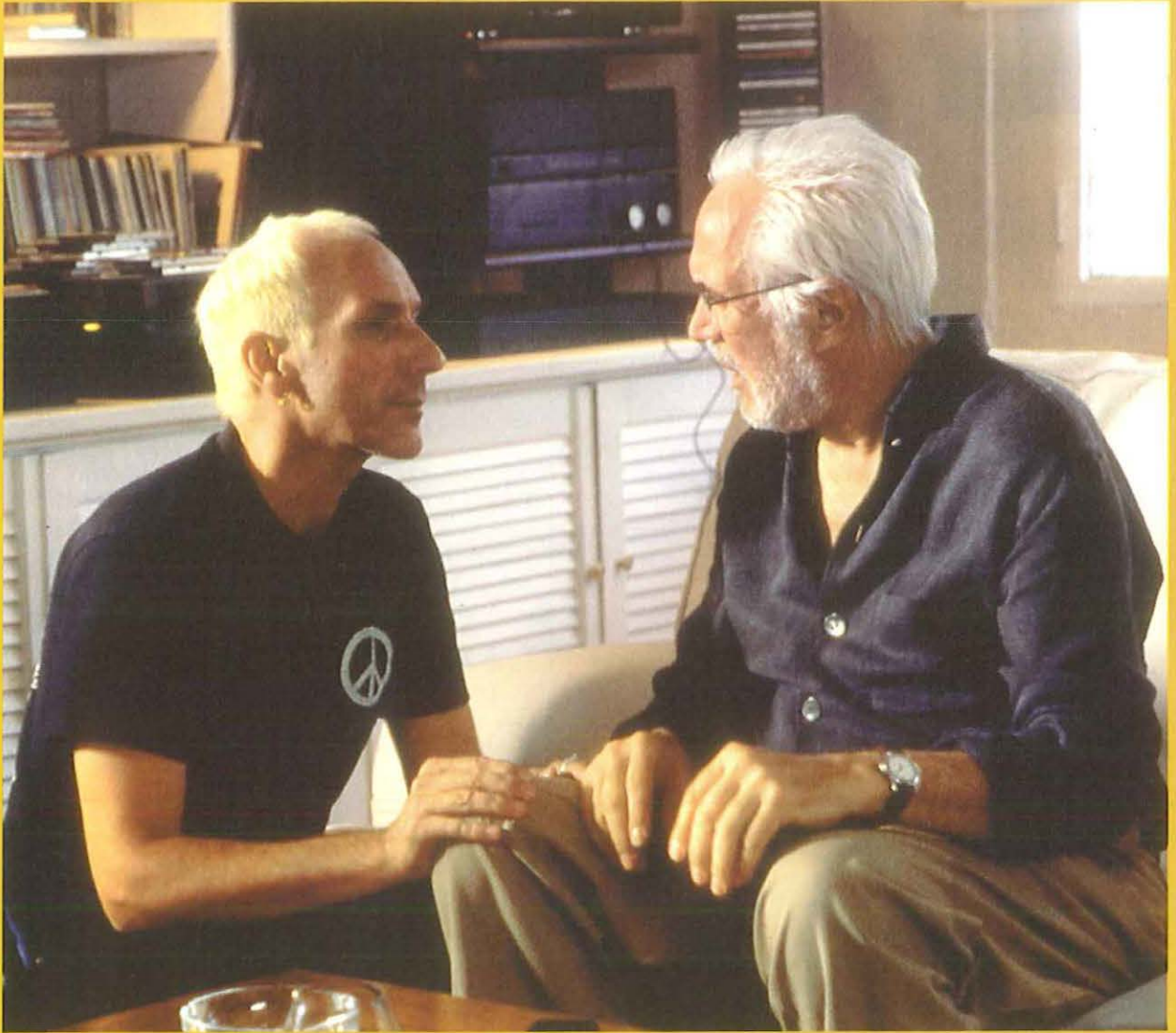
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Entidades colaboradoras:



**donostiakultura.com**

Martin (Hache)



# Abstracts

## FEDERICO LUPPI

Ángel Fernández-Santos

*"One of the most elegant known craftsmen of cinema in the Spanish language. The elusive astuteness of the movements contained in his command of stillness, his rare ability to take over, with not even the slightest indication of effort, the staged spaces surrounding him, the mixture of strength and agility with which he handles the magnets of his presence, are some indications of the wealth of his expressive luggage and the skill with which he handles the introspection of a camera".* That's how the author begins his passionate, well-defined portrait of the actor Federico Luppi.

He states that, like Spencer Tracy, *"beneath the appearance of spontaneity his work conceals an enormous amount of preparation"*; relating him to *"the wild verbal self-confidence of Anthony Hopkins"*; and lastly, identifying him with the Japanese actor Toshiro Mifune, of whom, as he remembers, Kurosawa said *"he trebled all of his colleagues in speed of gesture"*. He underlines as most outstanding his work in the movies directed by Adolfo Aristarain while, on the subject of **El último tren (The Last Train, Diego Arsuaga, 2002)** he affirms that *"the passing of time increases Luppi's eloquence, while his gestural vocabulary grows in its strictness, becoming more selective, more austere, given that the scope of his expressive economy swells with each new movie, as a result of which he succeeds in representing more with less"*. Finally, he remarks that it is *"impossible to imagine any of Luppi's characters played by anyone else, since this excellent actor, on performing his part, invents his character, going on to destroy him when finished, by making him unrepeatable"*.

## LAS VENAS DESGARRADAS

Jesús Angulo/Mirito Torreiro

As a result of his recent voluntary exile in Madrid, the interview returns time and again to the political situation in Argentina. He sees his country as ravaged, as a place where a succession of military dictatorships and political leaders, as incompetent as they are corrupt, have thrown a once wealthy, cultured people into the deepest of despairs. Clearly left wing, he believes that Peronism is the incarnation of all Argentinean ills. But that doesn't make him any more of a sceptic. Quite the opposite, in fact he still believes that there is always something to fight for. Simply helping a fallen person back up onto his feet is justification enough. He proclaims that we have to keep nourishing dreams of a better world, even if it's only a bit better. He refuses to see himself as a failure, although he does admit to being defeated. It's not the same. A failure is someone who hasn't tried. He gives the impression of trying every day. Today, in Spain, he's starting to breathe again, although the bitter taste of his far-off Argentina continuously wells up in his mouth.

He can't help feeling nostalgic when he talks of his childhood in the little village of Ramallo. That's where he learned to ride horses before going to school. That's where he saw the first theatre "plays", short plays performed at the end of the shows given by the occasional travelling circuses. Circuses which bedecked Ramallo with colour and feline images. That's where he saw his first films in a small cinema which on weekends screened double bills received from Buenos Aires. That's where he read his first books in a small private library.

Then came his father's death and his departure for the city. He wanted to be a strip cartoonist and became a theatre actor. Then, suddenly, came cinema. Youngsters who read

Stanislavski and who admired Marlon Brando, Laurence Olivier, Marcello Mastroianni and Zbigniew Zybalski. Gradually specialising in dry, virile characters, always related to the most committed of filmmaking. With time his search turned its steps towards an increasingly more sober, natural kind of acting. He detests convoluted acting as much as he does the glamour of capricious actors. He prefers physical cinema, made man-sized, to sophisticated cinema; reflection to superficiality; psychological complexity to doctrinarian schematisation.

His career is highly charged with meaning, first with Héctor Olivera and Fernando Ayala; later, and above all, with Adolfo Aristarain. He makes forays with foreign directors, the Peruvian Francisco Lombardi, the Mexican Guillermo del Toro, the North American John Sayles, and the Uruguayan Diego Arsuaga. And his appearances are becoming increasingly common in Spanish cinema: Mario Camus, Agustín Díaz Yanes, Mariano Barroso... He feels like a co-participant in the films in which he works. He doesn't understand the actors who "slot in the disk" to work. Just as he doesn't understand the filmmakers who watch the film being shot from the distance of the video screen. He will never fail to throw himself wholeheartedly into each of the projects on which he works, even though he is the hardest of all critics when one of his movies is a failure.

This year, 2003, he is going to try his hand at directing. **Pasos** will mark his directorial debut. A movie set in a period he adores, that of the Spanish transition from the end of Franco's era to democracy. He gives the impression of someone would have liked his country, his Argentina, to have succeeded in doing the same thing at the end of one of the many dictatorships suffered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He longs for the time when acting will flow with no apparent difficulty, although underneath, always, inevitably, lies work. The signatories of this text believe that he arrived at this moment some time ago.

## 30 YEARS, MORE OR LESS

Manuel Pérez Estremera

The author remembers the young Aristarain whom, led by the filmmaker Mario Camus, arrived in Spain to work as an assistant director, continuing with the studies he had started in his native Argentina. He evokes the friendship which has continued to unite him with Camus ever since. Friendship was precisely to become a constant factor of his cinema, together with *"faithfulness, social inequality, his classic conception of the narrative, love, solidarity, but also of destruction between people"*. He stresses *"his ability to turn stomachs and consciences with his tales, his narrative style, his planning and his work with actors"*.

He splits his filmography into two stages. The first, which he calls the 80s, marked by the *"ability to handle commissions or genres and low-cost production formulas"*, including films like **La parte del león (The Lion's Share, 1978)**, **Tiempo de revancha (Time for Revenge, 1981)** and **Últimos días de la víctima (1982)**. And a second, the 90s, with *"an Aristarain who dominates his works, more personal and determined to tell his particular philosophy of life, with a more polished cast and, perhaps, deeper depth of subject"*, outstanding among which are **Un lugar en el mundo (A Place in the World, 1991)**, **Martín (Hache) (Martín (H), 1997)** and **Lugares comunes (Common Ground, 2002)**. He ends with the statement that he *"considers absolutely essential the making of films and the saying of things like those seen and heard in Aristarain's movies"*.

## CONTARLA A SU MANERA

*Jesús Angulo / Mirito Torreiro*

Like Luppi, his screen alter ego, he lost his father at an early age. Like him, he had to work at just about everything before being able to work in cinema. He didn't study cinema, he started from the bottom up: extra, production secretary, screenwriter, assistant director, second unit director... He moved to Spain when Argentinean cinema got too small for him. He was taken there by the Spanish filmmaker Mario Camus, the only person whom he considers as his master. In addition to working with Spanish filmmakers like Vicente Aranda, Eugenio Martín or, above all, Camus himself, he also worked for coproductions turned in Spain and directed by people like Sergio Leone, Lewis Gilbert, Robert Parrish, Melvin Frank...

He returned to Argentina. But not because he felt himself to be an Argentinean director. His anarchist ideology told him that cinema had no frontiers. He simply believed that there it would be easier to enter the world of directing. The same reason led him to take the decision to stay there, instead of forming part of the Diaspora caused by the Argentinean crisis. He may well have felt just as much of a foreigner in his own country as he did anywhere else. He still had years to work as an assistant director, with filmmakers like Juan José Stagnaro, Juan José Jusid, Sergio Renán, Eliseo Subiela...

He finally succeeded in directing a personal film, acclaimed by the critics, but a flop at the box-offices, *La parte del*

*león (The Lion's Share)*. He snapped up assignments, like *La playa del amor* and *La discoteca del amor (The Disco of Love)*, so that he could continue learning the profession. He has never completely stopped accepting these commissions: *Las aventuras de Pepe Carvalho (The Adventures of Pepe Carvalho)* (for television), *La extraña/ The Stranger*, his only film in English and *La ley de la frontera*. But it was three movies, *Un lugar en el mundo (A Place in the World)*, *Martín (Hache) - (Martin (H))* and *Lugares comunes (Common Ground)*, which were to form the most coherent corpus of his filmography.

All three are films populated by beings who have been defeated thousands of times, but who still have something to fight for, ideals to defend, dreams which help them to handle the wait. Aristarain's characters are always losers, but at least they never give up half way through the game. They take no joy in licking their wounds, or in exhibiting their scars. They move, sometimes with violence, like rushes but, like them, keep their feet solidly planted in their ideological foundations. They love, even though they don't always know how to say that they do. They die, they almost always die. And they talk. They talk non-stop, exactly the opposite of Aristarain himself, an incorrigibly timid man, who when in public tends to speak in single syllables. If his passion for cinema hadn't pushed him towards filming, Adolfo Aristarain would now be a solitary, perhaps even unsociable novelist. Luckily cinema won him over, and there's always some kind of a new project or other going through his mind.