

Ace Cruz Herrera

Hollywood actor/director/producer/screenwriter wins award in International Film Fest

by CYNTHIA DE CASTRO / AJPress

“AND the Best SciFi Picture Award goes to...*Outrage!*”

Those amazing words will never be forgotten by Fil-Am producer/ actor/director Ace Cruz Herrera as he received the award for his brainchild movie during the Awards Show of the 2009 Action on Film (AOF) International Festival held in Pasadena last July 30.

The (AOF) International Festival is one of the most progressive film festivals on the scene today attended by writers, producers, directors and filmmakers from all over the globe. Held in the beautiful city of Pasadena, the AOF Festival Award Show recognizes the best from hundreds of films, videos, and documentaries from around the world.

Outrage, which won the Best SciFi Picture Award, stars Michael Madsen, Natasha Lyonne, and Michael Berryman, and Ace Cruz Herrera, who also directed and produced the film.

Ace Cruz Herrera is one of the growing number of Filipino-Americans who have made a name for themselves in Hollywood. He has worked with famous actors like Michael Madsen, Natasha Lyonne, Lee Majors, Michael Berryman, Sam Jones, Michael Pare, Philipp Michael Thomas, Kathleen Kinmont, Todd Bridges, and Joe Estevez.

A partial list of the films and TV shows he has starred in include: *Psychotic Urban Task Force, Last Chance, The Chain, America's Most Wanted, Unsolved Mysteries, Dead Center, Homeboys, Fetter Street, and Deadly Reactor*. In theatre, he has starred in *Hamlet, Hello Out There, Something in the Basement, the Legend of Lamang, Seascape with Sharks & Dancers, Jacque and his Master, Nicolas Nickelby, This Lady's Not for Burning, Killing Game and Winterset*.

Ace was born in Manila, Philippines to Bing and Yolie Cruz-Herrera. They immigrated to Los Angeles when Ace was 3. He went to IHM elementary school in Los Angeles, then to LeConte Junior High school, and to John Marshall High School.

“I saw my first play in Jr. High School, which really sparked my

desire to become an actor. I was 13 years old then. But I never really took it seriously until I graduated from high school,” remembered Ace, who then went to the University of Southern California taking up Bachelor of Fine Arts major in Drama. After graduating from college he started to produce stage plays he acted in.

“My parents gave me my first break. They funded my education in USC and most of my earlier stage play productions that I produced and acting in,” Ace admitted. “I got into Hollywood, by just being in Hollywood all my life. Growing up, I always saw movie productions going on. Then Albie Lorenzo, a well-known Philippine showbiz manager, discovered me in a play I was doing and he asked me to start an acting career in the Philippines. He offered to be my manager so I went to the Philippines and started a career there. I was in the Philippines from 1992 to 1996 acting in movies, under contract with Viva Films.”

After 10 years of acting, Ace decided he wanted to try filmmaking and went back to USC Film School for three years. His strong leadership and ambition to succeed led him to open up his own production company, Spirit Films.

“Making my first film has been the most memorable incident for me. I begged and borrowed money from relatives to make that first movie called *Last Chance* where I co-starred with *Different Strokes'* actor Todd Bridges and Judy Ann Santos. It took me 4 years to finally finish that movie, because I was really just learning how to make movies, so everything was a learning experience. I made the movie for \$10,000 and was able to sell it and make a profit at the American Film Market, where they buy and sell movies. It was really ex-



citing to make a profit off your first movie. Most first-time film makers never make a dime on their first movie, but I did, which started my filmmaking career,” Ace told the *Asian Journal*.

Herrera met an investor who wanted to make a movie and that set him to his next film, *Urban Task Force* which he also directed and starred in with Sunshine Cruz. The success of that movie led to his third film *Psychotic* which he directed and starred in with Sam Jones (*Flash Gordon*), Joe Estevez (Martin Sheen's brother), and Kathleen Kinmont (*Renegades*). His biggest film to date is his fourth film *Fate* which starred Lee Majors (*Six Million Dollar Man*), Philip Michael Thomas (*Miami Vice*), and Michael Pare (*Streets of Fire*). His fifth film is *The Golem*, which he stars with Christopher Atkins' (*Blue Lagoon*) daughter, Britney Bowman. Ace's sixth film is *Outrage* which won him the coveted AOF award.

“Being an actor myself, I can understand the thinking of an actor. And I've already been used to dealing with name actors from the very beginning of my filmmaking career. If you act professionally and know what you are doing, actors can relate to you and respect you and they will do what you say. Each movie I do, I try to get bigger name actors attached to my film. As my budget



goes up, the bigger my name actors also get. So it's exciting to see each of my film grow bigger and bigger. Now that I've won an award for *Outrage* for best picture/sci fi in the Action on Film International Film Festival, I know I will be able to make bigger budget films,” said Ace.

The award-winning director talked about the challenges he had with his sixth film. “The plot of *Outrage* is a woman who inherits a lot of money from her dead father and an ex-military sniper tries to take it away from her. In order for her to escape, she has to learn the law of attraction. It's a thriller with a spiritual message,” said Ace.

Asked by *Asian Journal* which among his movies are his favorites, Ace quickly stated, “My three favorites would be my first movie *Last Chance* because it was a personal movie to me. And it was my baby that started my career. My second would be *Fate*

because it was a piece where I had a lot of fun with the crew and actors. I usually bond with my crew and actors and that was one picture I really felt close to my crew and actors. I made great friends from that film. Up to this day I have long time friends because of that film and it was also my start in making movies on film and not HD. My third would be *Outrage*, because it has a spiritual message on the film.”

Coming from a closely-knit family, Ace credits his parents for his success. “My parents were very supportive all through my career. They are loving parents that have been together for a very long time. At first, they really did not want me to get into the filmmaking world because they knew the difficulty in making a living in this profession, but after my third film and I was starting to make money and making a living making movies, they did not mind anymore. Like most



Galing Pinoy showcases the triumph of the Filipino spirit - the Filipino's innate perseverance to rise above. A double entendre, **Galing Pinoy** literally translates to both coming from (or brought to you by) the Filipino and Filipino ingenuity.



parents, they just want the best for their child,” he said.

Admitting that he has dedicated his life to the arts, Ace says he spends most of his time in developing scripts, raising funds for feature films and practicing being in the moment.

“My plan is going from one film to another. I have a new picture called *Fight Quest* that I am developing with a good friend of mine, Ben Sablan. I see myself in five years directing a big studio picture for Warner Bros. or Universal pictures,” said Ace.

Ace will be visiting the Philippines next week. While there, he will have a press conference to promote *Outrage*. “My hope is to have people watch that movie and make them think in making better choices in their lives. I believe in making movies that have spiritual content, to inspire people. Movies with a positive message that can help people become better beings,” said Ace. “I am an avid meditator. I believe one should be in a peaceful place at all times to find creativity and happiness from within,” he added.

And that is the key to this award-winning actor/director's success—his inherent desire to make a positive difference in life by inspiring people and promoting happiness. May this be just the first of many awards, *Direk*. Congratulations! ■

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