

AGGIELIFE

THE BATTALION

Page 3

Tuesday, February 22, 2000

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE BATT



Director Robert Rodriguez



ROBERT HYNECEK/THE BATTALION

Robert Rodriguez is an oddity in the film world. He stands alone for having made the smallest budgeted movie ever to be released by a studio. His feature film debut, *El Mariachi*, cost \$7,000 to make and was picked up by Columbia Pictures for release. Rodriguez has since directed four highly acclaimed films which include *Desperado*, *From Dusk Till Dawn*, *Roadracers*, and *The Faculty*. At a press conference held here at Texas A&M Saturday afternoon, *The Battalion* was able to ask the renowned director a few questions.

leaving the project was because everyone got fired — because they were not going to announce it for four months. So we had to say [it was due to] creative differences. I didn't really want to wait around.

and they are just slugging around, in Texas everyone is still really excited to be working on movies. They are really enthusiastic. It helps because you are not having to go around and try to lift people's spirits.

film Austin, but they don't have a place to shoot interior set scenes, so it drives a lot of business away.

Q: Explain why you selected *El Mariachi* to screen here at this festival?

I did not select it. They [the festival directors] selected it. They told me to come and they were going to show *Mariachi*, and I was like, "Sure."

Q: The period in between *El Mariachi* and *Desperado* was when you directed *Roadracers*, right?

Yeah. I was looking for something small.

Q: How do you feel about violence in the movies?

Well, I really never felt like I needed to be everyone's parent, but it does kind of bug you. That's why I am making *Spy Kids* — because I wanted something like *Desperado* that my kids could watch.

Q: So, it's already going, you've already bought it?

We are not even buying it. They are just going to lease it to us and the money that gets made goes back to the city to develop the site after we're gone. It is only for an interim use, we'll only be using it for a few years until they need the space. We are not really putting money in, it is not a commercial venture.

Q: Talk a little bit about what the Texas Film Festival is trying to showcase here with independent films and talk a little about your experiences.

If they had told me to pick a movie, I would have picked *Mariachi* because that's the one that I did by myself and it is the one that I find the most inspiring to people who want to be filmmakers also.

Q: Can you talk a little bit about that project?

I wanted to take advantage of the downtime for me to go work with a film crew and practice with 35 mm. Someone offered me *Roadracers*, and I thought that was good. In a month's time I could write, shoot, direct and edit and get done with the whole feature and get some of that experience before going and doing *Desperado*. It was just to get some practice.

Q: Can you talk about going from *El Mariachi* with a budget of \$7,000 to a film like *Desperado* with a budget of \$7 million?

With *Mariachi*, I was limited with what I had and what I had access to. When you can do anything, that almost makes it more difficult. You are thinking, "I can do anything. Now what should I do?"

Q: Are you going to try to get some more time there allotted?

Maybe if it works out; then we can probably keep it there longer. If the community likes it there and if it does everything we say it is going to do, then we are going to be giving a lot back to the community. Getting people in the area to come get internships, especially the East Side of Austin because that is where it is. We have a lot of things we want to do. If we don't, they can always get rid of us, but we are not putting a lot of money into it. Each production, instead of rent they would come renovate it. Put in air conditioning, put in soundproofing, leave something to make the stages a little better.

Q: What does that mean for you?

It's great for me because people inspired me. People like Spike Lee and Steve Soderbergh really made me think, "I should really be trying to do something." If I want to make it, instead of griping about what I don't [have], I should be focusing on what I do have.

Q: Do you have any more botched project stories like *The Mask of Zorro*?

No, after that I was a bit wary of signing on before there was a script. Which was why I turned down some big movies.

Q: What can you tell us about the hangars that are being converted to sound stages in Austin?

It's something we have been looking at for awhile. We've been wanting to put up some sort of studio space. I've been shooting in Austin for awhile, but I've had to rent out warehouses from people and it's a pretty high premium right now because everyone has occupied Austin.

Q: You seem very self-assured and very confident. In the filmmaking process, is there ever a moment when you experience self-doubt?

Yeah. There a lot of times when you are not sure. But you get to trust your instincts and sometimes it is hard. Sometimes you will cover yourself, and then you will find your original inspirational idea was right. After awhile, you know when you have a greater force driving you. I have seen filmmakers who, somewhere along the line, lose it, though. They are really hot for awhile, and then all their films start going down. It all comes back to self-doubt.

Q: Tell us about the sequels for *From Dusk Till Dawn*. Was that something you always wanted to do?

No. That's just the nature of the company. Dimension is very much of a sequel type place. They have the movies that they make and if it is a title that will get the rental business, they will make a lesser videos for it and people always rent those. That's how some of the extra revenue comes in.

Q: Do you have more fun doing your own projects than doing some of the bigger stuff?

Yeah, because you can still make a really big movie. When you see the new movie, it's going to look huge. It only cost \$29 million, but it's going to look like \$100 million movie because I can control the costs.

Q: So will these be used for stuff other than just film?

It can be for film, commercial, multi-media, games.

Q: Can you tell us about the importance of coming to smaller festivals like this one, and the importance of having film festivals like the Texas Film Festival?

I know that it really benefits a lot of people who come to these, and they want to learn something. A lot of time it benefits me just as much to come and talk about what you are doing. You don't really reflect on things that are past, and then, you look back and you are like, "Yeah. I really did do that all by myself." It makes you remember where you came from. It gives you more confidence in a way. You see what you did to what you are doing now.

Q: What ever happened with you not directing *The Mask of Zorro*?

That was a project that had just been plagued for a long time. Before I had gotten on, it had been started up and stopped a few times. It was really difficult to get it going.

Q: You always talk about wanting to stay in Texas, what is that about?

When I was younger I never thought I would be a filmmaker because I didn't want to go to L.A. You feel vindicated when you can stay in Texas and make movies and never go anywhere.

Q: Is it going to be a big studio?

It's really not even a big studio. I've never even shot in a real studio. I've always just used warehouses that we converted. But you build your sets and they are pretty soundproof. You need a space that is big enough, has enough parking and has enough freespan, which those do. No support posts, so you can build sets and shoot all your interiors. A lot of people come to

Q: You always talk about wanting to stay in Texas, what is that about?

When I was younger I never thought I would be a filmmaker because I didn't want to go to L.A. You feel vindicated when you can stay in Texas and make movies and never go anywhere.

Q: What do you see for the future of Texas filmmaking? Is there a point you don't want it to reach?

Unlike in L.A. where everyone is so jaded by the movies

Q: So will these be used for stuff other than just film?

It can be for film, commercial, multi-media, games.

Q: What ever happened with you not directing *The Mask of Zorro*?

That was a project that had just been plagued for a long time. Before I had gotten on, it had been started up and stopped a few times. It was really difficult to get it going.

Q: What do you see for the future of Texas filmmaking? Is there a point you don't want it to reach?

Unlike in L.A. where everyone is so jaded by the movies

Q: Is it going to be a big studio?

It's really not even a big studio. I've never even shot in a real studio. I've always just used warehouses that we converted. But you build your sets and they are pretty soundproof. You need a space that is big enough, has enough parking and has enough freespan, which those do. No support posts, so you can build sets and shoot all your interiors. A lot of people come to

Oscar time marks Hollywood's own 'season of giving'

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Is there anybody left in Hollywood who hasn't been nominated for some kind of award this year?

"We definitely wanted to do ours before the Oscar nominations," said Laurie Silvers, president of the entertainment Website Hollywood.com, which presented its second annual awards for top movie trailers about two weeks before the Academy Award nominations came out last week. "We wanted people thinking about whether the best movie trailers have any association with the best movies."

"We definitely wanted to do ours [awards] before the Oscar nominations."

— Laurie Silvers
President of Hollywood.com

Entertainment awards are proliferating, with 332 ceremonies last year, up from 252 in 1997, according to the trade publication Variety.

Some of the award ceremonies this season: —Faces and follicles get their due at the first Hollywood Makeup Artist and Hair Stylist Guild Awards on March 19.

Awards will be presented in such categories as contemporary and period hairstyling and special-effects makeup. Nominated films include *Sleepy Hollow*, *Tea With Mussolini* and *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*. —Positive social and moral messages in film and

The industry has ovations and backslaps for directors, writers and cinematographers, and salutes for the best movie trailers, the best publicity campaigns and the best raising of awareness on social issues. Even the awards shows can win awards.

Guilid Awards chairman Alan Fama said movie makeup and hairstyles often are overlooked and the awards are meant to "bring attention to the fact that our work is not just for a beauty-shop clientele. You don't just spray an actor's hair and have them come back next week."

TV will be lauded at the 23rd annual International Angel Awards, selected by two groups, Excellence in Media and the National Association for Family and Community Education. Contenders in the movie category include *The Green Mile*, *The Straight Story*, *Music of the Heart* and *Runaway Bride*.

The hoopla all builds up to Hollywood's grandest night, the Academy Awards, on March 26.

Awards by groups such as the Directors Guild and Screen Actors Guild offer a sneak peek at how some top Oscar categories might play out, while organizers of other ceremonies schedule their awards to feed off Oscar excitement.

—Animal welfare is the theme at the 14th annual Genesis Awards presented by the Ark Trust, a humane group.

The awards this year will include honors for the movie *Instinct*, which fosters respect for great apes, and the animated feature *The Iron Giant*, which includes a stark anti-hunting scene, said Ark Trust founder Gretchen Wyler.

—Four days before the Oscars, the 37th annual awards for best promotional campaigns will be held by the Publicists Guild of America.

Nominated for best movie publicity efforts are

American Beauty, *The Matrix*, *Stuart Little*, *The Talented Mr. Ripley* and *Toy Story 2*.

"Publicists are always the last to be recognized for anything," said Henri Bollinger, who heads the guild's awards committee.


Ceremonies themselves sometimes garner honors. The Oscar, Grammy and Tony broadcasts all won Emmys last fall, while last year's Oscar show is nominated in the TV musical variety category for the Directors Guild awards March 11.

There are also awards no one in the industry wants to win. Several awards are for poor filmmaking.

The 20th annual Golden Raspberry Awards for the worst movies of 1999 will be announced the day before the Oscars. This year's nominees for the Razzies include the blockbusters *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace*, *Big Daddy* and *The Blair Witch Project*.

Admission is free and a short discussion about the movie will accompany the viewing. Presented by the International Students Association and the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness

To inform us of your special needs, please call 845-8770 or stop by MSC 223-I.



76GUMBY

764-8629

Hours
Sun - Wed 11am - 2am
Thurs - Sat 11am - 3:30am

GUMBY DALLIE MENU

Choose any one of the following **\$5.99**

1. 14" Cheese Pizza	2. 12" 1 topping + soda
3. 10" 2 topping + soda	4. 10 wings + soda
5. 10" Pokey Stix + 5 wings	6. 10" Cheese Pizza + 5 wings
7. 12" Pokey Stix + soda	8. 10" Cheese Pizza + 2 pepperoni rolls
	9. 5 Pepperoni rolls + soda

Off Campus Aggies Graffiti Party

When: Tonight@7:30
Where: College Station Conference Center
What: General Meeting
Theme: Graffiti Party

Wear an old t-shirt that you do not mind writing on and bring high-lighters to write on under blacklight. There will be t-shirts sold for \$3 if you don't have one.

Office: Koldus 137 Phone# 845-0688 <http://oca.tamu.edu>
It is never too late to join.

Tired of the same old movies?
Come view a foreign film!

What: "Cyrano de Bergerac - a dashing French officer falls in love with a girl named Roxanne but must hide his feelings due to a physical defect"

Where: Gallery B at MSC Forsyth Center Galleries

When: Thursday, February 24, 2000 at 7:00p.m.

Admission is free and a short discussion about the movie will accompany the viewing.
Presented by the International Students Association and the MSC L.T. Jordan Institute for International Awareness

To inform us of your special needs, please call 845-8770 or stop by MSC 223-I.