



INTERVIEW ► Today, in «L'últim espòiler», we talk with Hector Mas, manager and cultural producer who ha

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MANAGER AND CULTURAL PRODUCER



«We must differentiate between what is cultural and what is purely entertainment»



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«L'últim espòiler» opens its doors today to Hector Mas, manager and cultural producer not only in Andorra, but «wherever he is needed». Director of important milestones such as the Ull Nu Festival, which celebrated its tenth edition this year, Mas has also seen his career expand in areas such as audiovisual production, acting and screenwriting.

–How did you start your journey in the audiovisual world?

–I started studying theatre, but it wasn't what I really liked and I was bitten by the cinema bug, since we've always liked it a lot at home. From there I did a FP in audiovisual production at the EMAV (Escola de Mitjans Audiovisual) and then I did the Audiovisual Communication degree at Pompeu Fabra University. At the same time, we

made a great friendship with Alfons Casal, the artistic director of the Escena Nacional d'Andorra, and we have been making our own short films and other projects. My hobby has gone hand in hand with my studies and the professionalization of my career.

–Always keeping culture in mind, right?

–Yes, everything I have done professionally and personally has always been linked to culture. First of all because my grandfather is Sergi Mas, a very well-known artist in the country and through whom I have been absorbing everything related to creativity, imagination, loving our roots, the fact of not losing sight of our origins... Everything what I do is mainly related to culture and if not to audiovisual, where I also make productions on my own.

–And how do you see the position of cultural production today?

–It is very difficult to explain. In Andorra there is an oversupply of culture, every week we have activities of all kinds and for all ages because both

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the municipalities and the institutions or Government make their own programs. We can't say that he doesn't bet on culture here, of course he doesn't, but it's another thing to do it sensibly, with interest and for the public and the institutions to give it the value it should have. These proposals must be broken down, since everything is always put in the same bag. It is important to make a distinction between what is cultural and what is purely entertainment.

–As you explain on your website, «you must work where is necessary». What is the basis for accepting a project?

–First of all, and inevitably, it depends a lot on the economic situation that a selfemployed person like me may have. Of course, the experience gives you the possibility to go along and evaluate the projects for their content and what they can bring to you at that time. And about the sentence you comment, I am not only referring to a physical place, but also in the field of professionalization. I don't care if the project is big or small, or if I get a big salary for it, as long as it's from some-



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so far away from you». In the end, life gives you what you need at every moment and you try to develop and learn from everyone around you. It's a blessing to work with people who have this experience because you learn a lot from them, in addition, they are projects that appear like a mushroom in your life and you couldn't even expect them. And the moment they propose to you... you know you can't say no because it's super enriching.

-And what would you say is the project you enjoyed the most?

-This is easy. What marked me the most and continues to mark me is the Ull Nu Festival, as it has conditioned me in many aspects, both personal and professional. It is a project for which I have a large share of responsibility, I have practically seen it born and grow. In addition, it is not a one-time festival, but is repeated every year and demands permanent attention.

-Speaking of the Ull Nu Festival, where does a project of this nature come from?

-It is an idea that was born in the Youth Service of the Municipality of Andorra la Vella and I joined it in the second year as a participant. It was a meeting where all those young people from the country who studied audiovisuals or who liked cinema met, but after four years some of them were quite exhausted. Since I wanted to continue, I copied the bases of another festival and instead of a sample I turned it into a competition, making it bigger. I also didn't imagine getting to the point where we are now, it's a piece of work where at the beginning you have no idea what you're doing, you are disoriented along the way and you keep what works and put aside what doesn't.

-It has already established itself as one of the leading audiovisual festivals in the country. Do you feel the pressure year after year?

-I put the pressure on myself. The whole team is very active and every year we look for new challenges to do. In this edition, for example, being the tenth, we created two great novelties: on the one hand, having a guest of honor from a certain country come to present their projects, and, on the other hand, the script laboratory. These are two proposals that add to all the ones we already had in the previous edition. So pressure? Well, of course there is the pressure of wanting to do it well so that people will enjoy it, otherwise there would be no point in doing it.

-And are the Government and other institutions providing enough means and showcases for the festival?

-I can't complain. The festival works thanks to public subsidies and we have the support every year of the Ministry of Culture and the Youth Service of the Municipality of Andorra la Vella, in addition to other institutions and entities that give prizes in each category. From whom we do not receive any kind of support, and it is a fact that is quite surprising when seen from the outside, it is Andorra Turisme. The directors of other festivals always tell me: «You really don't have the support of the institution that is dedicated to the tourism promotion of your country?». Well, no, we don't, and look, I've been to see them several times. Maybe one day we'll get them to help us or maybe the festival doesn't go along the lines they're looking for, who knows. We have been doing it and over the years we have shown that the project has value, and that the public and the institutions are interested in it. In the end I pilot the ship, but it is a project of all of us who form it.

-During these years, you have also become proficient in other areas such as production, interpretation or screenwriting.

-It wasn't something you wanted, it's

life that takes you down different paths. I was studying the degree and at the time of taking on the Final Degree Project I decided to write a screenplay because I believed that my dream was to be a screenwriter. Betevé bought the series of some of my colleagues, 'El muerto vivo', and I entered the team of screenwriters without premeditation, since while I was writing the scripts I was setting up Ull Nu and working at the same time in a web series with my roommates. At the end of the day, it's all about hitting all the stops, although when you do this in the audiovisual world there is a tendency to think that it's because you don't really know what you want to do and what you do is keep trying. It is also true that, once you are on track, this also helps you to, for example, be able to speak different languages on a shoot: that of the scriptwriters, that of the actors, that of the director of photography...

-Sure, I imagine that this gives you the possibility to approach the project with a multiplicity of visions.

-Many times I have said to myself that «Jack of all trades, master of none», but I really don't want to be a master of anything. In life, you absorb knowledge from the people around you and you are lucky enough to say «I don't want to do this in the end», but the fact that you have done it for a certain time does not mean that you have wasted your time. You have acquired a series of experiences and knowledge that you can perhaps apply again in another project, as it is a very wide range that can always be used.

-And having already worked in so many different areas... which one would you stay with?

-Today's Hector would tell you about programming and cultural management. It's practically what I do most during the year, either because I'm

organizing the Ull Nu Festival or because I'm curating an exhibition at the Government Exhibition Hall for next year. It's not so much exploiting my creative side anymore but the programmer side, where I always end up finding absolutely brilliant and very interesting things.

-What is left for Hector Mas to do? Is there a «life project» yet to be completed?

-Complicated question once again! I would tell you that my life's project was to find myself at peace with what I'm doing. The audiovisual profession is a profession with many doubts, a lot of instability, where you don't know whether to go this way or that... That's why I tell you that the biggest worry was being able to settle down. In a more practical field, but every time less, when you start studying cinema you immediately see yourself making a film. I have friends who have made their first feature film and although I think it's very cool, it's also a stick: it's a lot of work, a lot of money, upsets... I don't give it too much thought either, but maybe I would tell you to direct my own film would be my dream waiting to be fulfilled.

-One last piece of information about your next project that you can tell us about?

-It's not really a spoiler as such, because having received the subsidy from the Ministry of Culture you already know, but it's a short film that we want to shoot in September entirely in Andorra. The story tells the life of a girl accused of witchcraft as it was done here in the 16th century. It lasts about 15 minutes, in black and white, and with a large part of the team here. We are just starting to work, meeting the heads of each department... It is the short-term project that excites me the most right now. ≡

one who has an idea that they defend and believe in.

-I'm sure you remember some projects more complicated than others.

-Without a doubt, the biggest challenge was when Alfons Casal and I were lucky enough to co-produce the show 'Prostitution' at the Teatre Espanyol in Madrid. It was a theatrical work that had one of the most important directors in Spain, Andrés Lima, and a bestial cast with Carmen Machi, Carolina Yuste and Nathalie Poza. It was a total of two months in the capital and a challenge in every way, as we went headfirst into playing in the first division in a place that was not usual for us, with people we did not know and who had a big experience in making similar productions... In the audiovisual field, I would tell you that another of the great challenges, and at the same time one of the most exciting projects I have ever done, was with Dani Arellano, a colleague with whom I usually work. We both created a mapping in the Andorra pavilion at Expo2020 Dubai and it was a very interesting experience to be able to go there and apply it in situ.

-I suppose that Hector of a few years ago would never have imagined working on productions as big as these or with names of such resonance.

-The truth is, no. When you suddenly find yourself in a project like this you can only say «wow, maybe this person you had idealized in your head is not



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