

## CINEMA

STEVEN SPIELBERG / Director

## “How much success do I need?”

ROCÍO AYUSO, Los Angeles

There has been no shortage of success for Steven Spielberg, one of the most powerful figures in Hollywood, a director who has been a winner since the days of his first feature films, such as *Jaws*, *Close encounters of the third kind*, *Raiders of the lost ark* and *E.T.* which are all still fresh after more than 20 years. Nor does the director feel the need to reaffirm himself as a filmmaker after two decades in the business. His prestige was underlined by the photo where he didn't have enough hands to hold all the Oscars he received for *Schindler's List*, or by the Academy's recognition for *Saving Private Ryan*. At 55, with gray in his hair and at the helm of Dreamworks, one of Hollywood's major studios, he wonders:

“How much success do I need? I have enough to last me three lives. I don't need pats on the back, I'm not competing to make the greatest film in history. I only want to make films, to tell stories which can keep me interested during the two years involved in production, and, in the hope of having a good time myself, to enable others to enjoy themselves as well.”

It is from this relaxed position, in which there seems to be nothing to be won or lost, that Steven Spielberg refused offers to direct *Harry Potter* and *Spiderman*, two of last year's major box-office hits, in order to make *Minority Report*, his next film. The film is based on a short story by Philip K. Dick, —an author who has inspired other science fiction classics such as *Blade Runner* and *Total Recall*— and it is set in Washington in the year 2054, where crime is fought by a federal unit empowered to arrest criminals even before they break the law. A film in which, if the Spielberg name is synonymous with the Midas touch at the box office, all that was lacking was a star of the caliber of Tom Cruise as the lead.

“Tom was a natural choice. It was Tom who gave me the script to read three years ago, and he's also the best actor for the role. Even if it didn't come from him, I would have asked him to do it. It's something we had tried several times, but this time it worked,” explains Spielberg about his expensive choice of actor, with whom this film will have the tone of an action film. Though, as the director is quick to point out, it is a work that can be read on many more levels than Cruise's other blockbusters, such as *Mission: Impossible*.

“Though it happens in the future, it is a very contemporary story, and that's what attracted me, the confrontation of two ways of thinking. One, the belief that everyone makes his own destiny, against that which follows a map drawn by destiny or by a superior being,” says the director.

Spielberg cheerfully refuses to lean toward one or other of the two ways of thinking. “I



Steven Spielberg with the star of his latest film, Tom Cruise, who first brought the script to the director's attention.

They seem made for each other: Tom Cruise and Steven Spielberg. A logical team for Hollywood, which has taken twenty years to come about. “Of course I wanted to. Who doesn't want to work with Steven Spielberg?” says Cruise with a disarming smile about “a friendship that dates back to 1983,” when this now million-dollar smile had only recently been seen in *Risky Business*. Years in which Cruise has matured in one of the indus-

## Tom Cruise: “Everyone has to make their own future”

try's most successful careers, with 23 films and a box-office take of some \$2 billion; yet ambition is still the same. “My only desire is to go on working,” he confesses in reference to the thought that crossed his mind on July 3, his 40th birthday. “I remember when I was a

young actor, thinking what would become of me when I was 40, 50, 60. I would never have imagined this; but I still have a clear idea that the only thing I wanted, and still want, is to go on working,” says the actor. An example of this interest in cinema is the fact that he,

not Spielberg, was the initiator of *Minority report*. “Steven likes to say that now he's a rent-a-director,” he jokes; and as Cruise prepares to begin the filming of *The Last Samurai*, he has begun to develop a new version of *The War of the Worlds*, in which his functions are

so far limited to production, and dreams of directing “before everything is said and done.” There seems to be no lack of offers in this sense, though so far none of them are appealing. “We'll see what happens in another 20 years,” he muses aloud, an eternal optimist about the future. “I'm sure I don't believe in destiny,” he opines in reference to the theme of the film, “I take the view that everyone has to make their own future.”

control my life when my films are successful, and I blame destiny when they fail,” he jokes. He is, however, rather more serious when it comes to the paral-

“I don't need pats on the back. I am not competing to make the greatest film ever”

els between *Minority Report* and the tactics presently used in America's fight against terrorism. “The Department of Justice, the FBI and the CIA now have more powers to enable them to deal with terrorist groups,” tactics which in his opinion give them “the right to interfere in private life” to determine who is a threat to national security.

“What worries me,” he adds, “is being watched, listened to,

without having done anything.” These are violations of freedoms which bring to mind “the racial persecution which put thousands of Japanese Americans in internment camps in 1941, after the attack on Pearl Harbor.” However his attitude, far from criticizing the decision of president George W. Bush, supports the need to maintain this cutback in civil liberties as long as necessary. “On the one hand I want to protect my family, and ask the government to do all they can to prevent something like that from happening again,” he says in reference to September 11. “On the other hand we have to decide how much is too much, when it has to stop and we get our rights back,” he adds.

In spite of this rhetoric and his concern about the present situation, Spielberg dismisses any suggestion of a political career in his future. “I think my films can do more for the world

than any debate on CNN or any of those programs. I have no aspirations in that direction,” he declares.

His life seems to full of new

“Tom was the natural choice. I would have asked him to do it even if it wasn't his idea.”

films in a year when, besides the premiere of *Minority Report*, Spielberg is promoting a new version of *E.T.* for the wide screen, with new scenes and improved special effects, and for December plans to present his next film, *Catch Me If You Can*, with Tom Hanks and Leonardo DiCaprio, rumored to be an Oscar candidate. “It's the nearest thing to guerrilla cinema that someone with a name like Spielberg can make,”

the director jokes, unable to slow down his work rate even when he has everything. There is also his commitment to make one of the industry's most long-awaited films, the fourth installment of the Indiana Jones series. “It's not a matter of money or success, but of the good time I had making the other three,” he says. “I have always said they were among the best experiences in my life, and I'd like to revisit the personality, just because of the fun I had working with Harrison (Ford) and George (Lucas). If we haven't done so yet, it's because so far we haven't had a good story. Frank Darabont, the author and director of *The Shawshank Redemption*, *The Green Mile* and *The Majestic*, is in charge of the script, and if we don't film it about 2004, it will be because Harrison isn't available. So we'll have to wait till 2005 to see it, but it'll be worth the wait.