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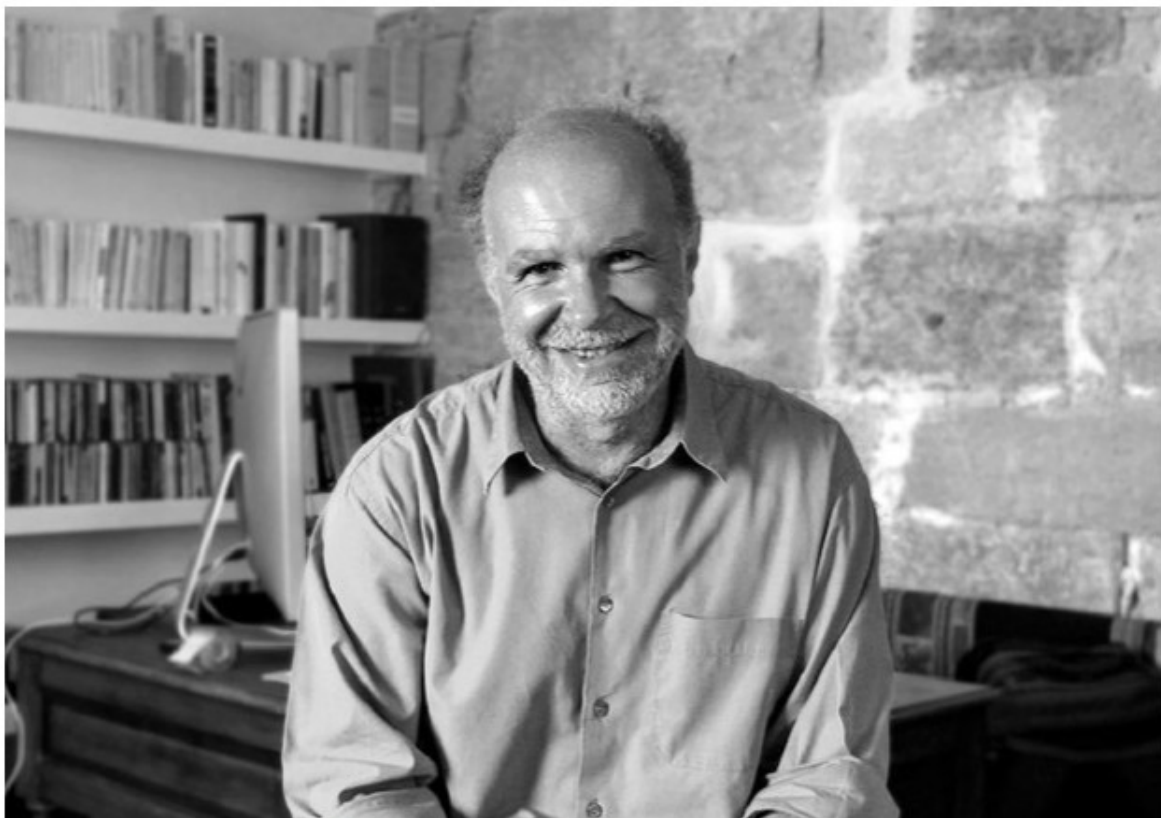
CINEMED 2021 Cinemed Meetings

Serge Lalou • Producer of *El portero*

"I've never been afraid of the future"

by **FABIEN LEMERCIER**

🕒 20/10/2021 - Interview with the producer of Les Films d'Ici Méditerranée who talks about the Aurel project, on the occasion of the Cinemed Meetings, but also about the situation in the industry



Emblematic producer at Les Films d'Ici since 1987, Serge Lalou also works in parallel with Films d'Ici Méditerranée, a company he founded in 2014. It is with this structure that he is present at the 43rd Festival du Cinéma Méditerranéen de Montpellier where he pitched the project *El portero*, which will be Aurel's second feature film after *Josep* [+], to the Cinemed Meetings development grant (read the news).

Cineuropa: After the success of *Josep* (Official Selection Cannes 2020, European Film Award, César and Lumière for best animated film), it is not a surprise to see you follow up with a new feature film with Aurel. What is a surprise is that the film will have real-life shots. Serge Lalou: *El portero* continues the question of drawing with a cartoonist as the main character, but he wanted to break away from what he had done and go in another direction while following the themes that interest him: Spain, memory, drawing and music. It will be pure fiction, but with visual interventions on which he is currently reflecting and experimenting. The project brings

together Jean-Louis Milesi for the script and Silvia Pérez Cruz for the music, as well as newcomers such as the Spanish actress Alba Flores ([Money Heist](#)) and Artus. The film will follow a character who, in searching for his grandfather's past, takes a journey into himself to find the drawing. The story will move from France to Spain and Valencia. The Catalan producer Jordi Oliva ([Imagic](#)) is already with us at this stage of development. He was there on Josep, since a pitch in Annecy. He was a new partner for me, but he turned out to be great and we have several projects together.

What characterises Les Films d'Ici Méditerranée compared to Les Films d'Ici? I have tried to have very distinct editorial lines since I have different partners in the two companies. First of all, Les Films d'Ici Méditerranée brings together talents from the Occitanie region: Aurel lives and works in Montpellier, Sylvère Petit, who received an advance on receipts from the CNC for *La Baleine* (which should be distributed by [Jour2Fête](#) and which is co-produced by Spain and Belgium), lives in Pézenas, etc. Then there is the Mediterranean with, in particular, the French company Les Films d'Ici Méditerranée. Then there is the Mediterranean, with the animated film *They Shot The Piano Player* by Fernando Trueba and Javier Mariscal (in co-production with Spain, the Netherlands and Portugal).

You have produced for cinema and television, fiction, documentary and animation. How do you view the current situation: the impact of the pandemic, the growth of platforms, the difficulties of cinemas, etc.?

As long as we maintain a strong public sector, we should not be afraid of the private sector and private opportunities, but they should be added to the mix. In my opinion, the biggest threat is those who go to elections wanting to abolish the TV licence fee and abolish public service. Because public service is a place that maintains diversity and we need centres that maintain it. Then, as long as the State is present and imposes obligations on those who develop and sell subscriptions on French territory, they participate in financing production. Another very interesting sign is to look at where the platforms are currently recruiting: in part at Arte, which is characterised by a certain French-style editorial rigour. The future has never frightened me and all the studies show that current developments are good for production in terms of volume. Afterwards, the question is: to do what with it? It is this subject of maintaining diversity, a certain number of obligations and a public authority that ensures that everyone can have access to culture, which is essential. As the obligations on platforms have won, I can only see positives. Production would only be in danger if the public authorities' sense of general interest in the audiovisual and film sectors disappeared.

On the question of theatres, I don't know. I like cinemas, but I don't have a fetish for them. The public authorities play their role by supporting a remarkable network on the territory, but if at some point our world changes and people no longer want to go to the cinema or want to go less, that will not prevent imagination from existing and expressing itself in other ways. I don't know how people will get out of the period we are still living in. It's true that it's much more romantic to say that we have a visceral attachment to the cinema and that it's a great experience, but I don't think we can decree the good of people for them.