

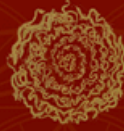
# The History of Cinema in the Philippines

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***Dalagang Bukid* (1919) was the First Feature-Length Filipino Film**

Source: IMDb and MUBI



The Philippines is home to one of Asia's oldest film industries. Cinema first came to the nation in 1897, when the first moving pictures were screened in Manila. Public interest in cinema began to rise steadily as more foreign films were brought in and screened, with American films being particularly popular. *Dalagang Bukid* (English title: *Country Maiden*), a silent film released in 1919, is recognized as the first full-length Filipino movie. The Philippine government celebrated the hundredth anniversary of the release of this film in 2019 as the centennial of cinema in the country. *Dalagang Bukid* was made by filmmaker José Nepomuceno, widely dubbed the 'Father of Philippine Cinema'. He was instrumental in the beginnings of Filipino cinema, directing nearly twenty films between 1919 and 1933.

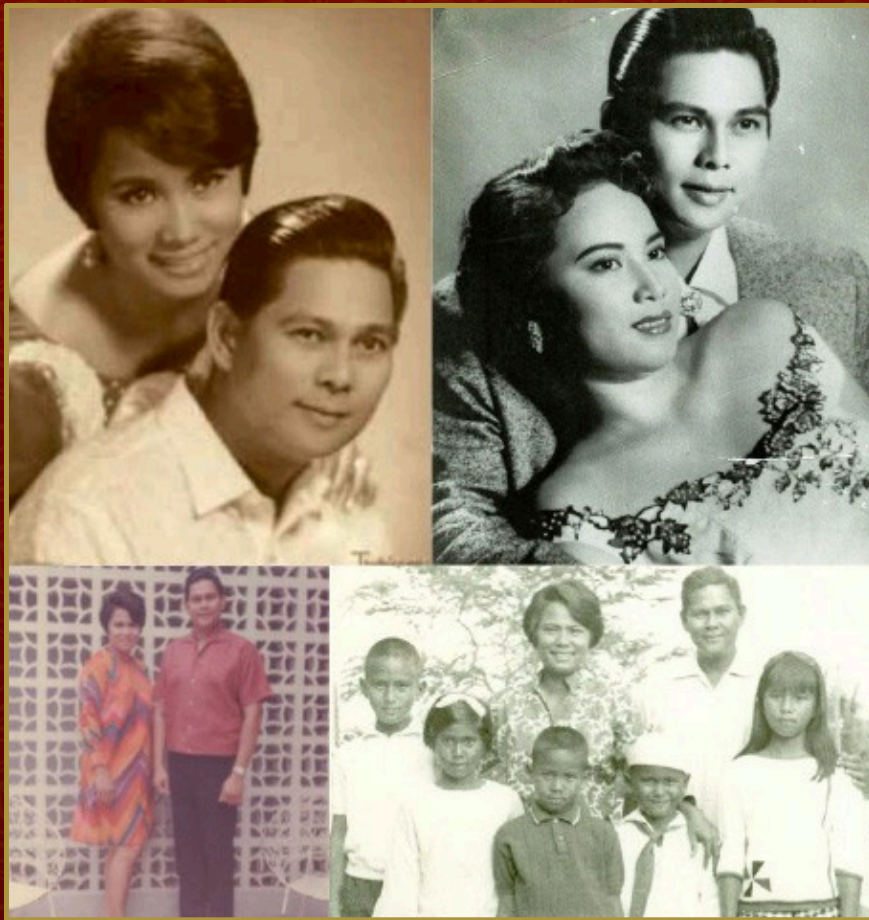
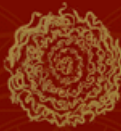
Other filmmakers began to emerge soon, like Max and Florentino Borromeo and Celestino Rodriguez, who collaborated on the 1922 film *El Hijo Disobediente* (English title: *The Disobedient Son*). After the success of several silent films in the twenties, talkies came to the country, with the first Filipino sound and dialogue movie being Nepomuceno's *Punyal na Guinto* (English title: *Golden Dagger*) (1933). Sound film became popular with *Bertoldo Ug Balodoy* (1938) and the 1940 releases *Mini* (English title: *Fake*) and *Gugmang Talagsaon* (English title: *Rare Love*). This era also saw the rise of Carmen Concha, widely recognized as one of the first female filmmakers in the country. Her most popular works were the 1939 films *Magkaisang Landas* (English title: *Paths That Met*) and *Yaman ng Mahirap* (English title: *Wealth of the Poor*), along with *Pangarap* (English title: *Dream*) (1940).



**A Stamp featuring José Nepomuceno, known as the Father of Philippine Cinema**

Source: Wikimedia Commons and FDCP

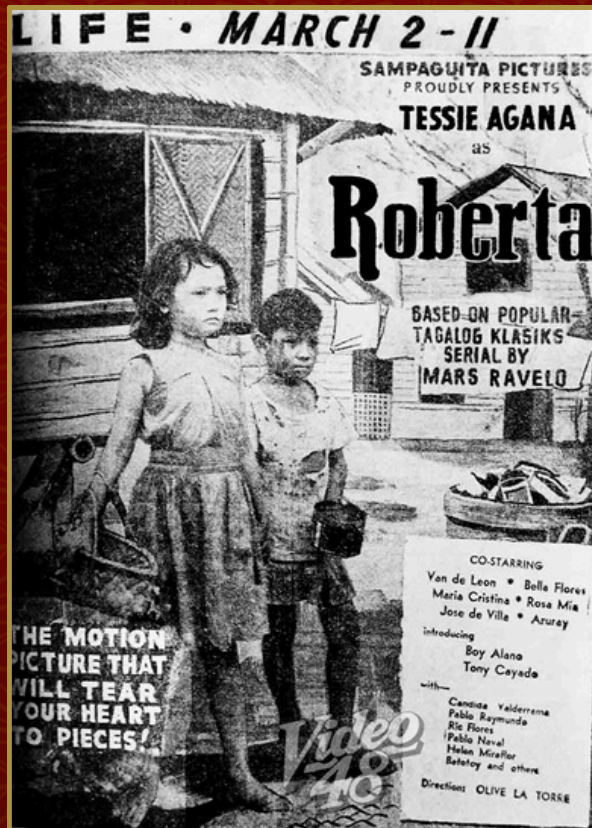
By the end of the thirties, the Filipino film industry was flourishing. Many Filipino film stars had become household names, and filmmakers were making works in several genres. There was heavy competition from Hollywood movies as they were quite beloved to Filipino audiences, but the regional movies also generated comparable hype and were watched almost as frequently. However, the advent of the Second World War nearly halted all cinema-related activities in the country. Most actors, directors, and crew members returned to live theater at this time.



**Gloria Sevilla and Mat Ranillo were a Power Couple in Filipino Cinema**

Source: Pika Pika

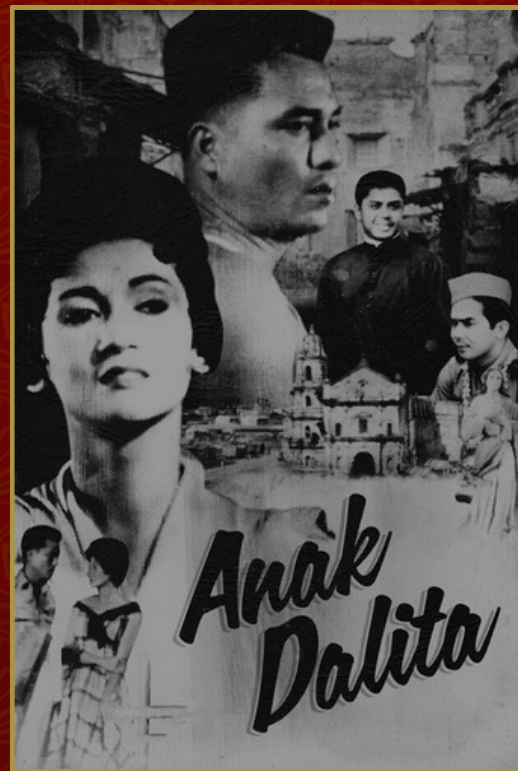
The Filipino film industry slowly began to blossom again after the war. A few movies that played a key role in reviving cinema in the country were the 1948 releases *Timbu Mata* and *Sa Kabukiran* (English title: *in the Mountains*) and the 1950 films *Tahas* (English title: *Mission*) and *Balud* (English title: *Wave*). Another key film was *Princesa Tirana* (1951), starring Mat Ranillo and Gloria Sevilla. This film was a huge box office hit, inspiring several hits starring the two In the following years: *Leonora*, *Be Forebearing*, *Border*, *Memoir*, *Wait for Me*, *Gloria My Child*, and *I Love You*. Ranillo and Sevilla later got married and started their own production company, through which they released many popular titles: *Paradise* (1955), *A Tear Fell on the Shore* (1955), *Town of Buenavista* (1969), and *Where is Heaven?* (1969).



**Roberta (1951) is known as the First Filipino Blockbuster**

Source: Blogspot

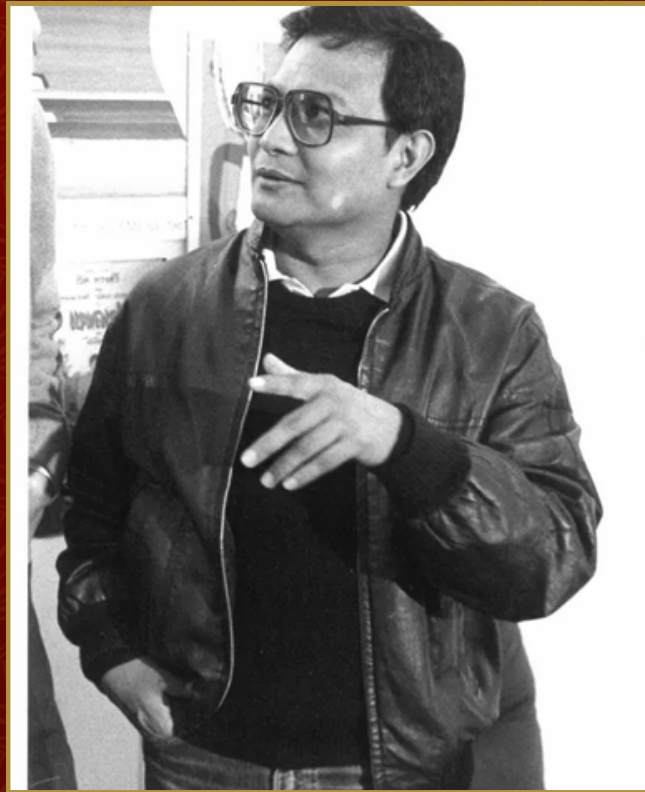
The fifties came to be a golden age for Filipino cinema, with many popular and record-breaking films released in 1953: *Broken Branches*, *Oh, Poor Children*, *Corn Rice*, *Hard Life*, *Where is Love*, and *The Silo*. Major production studios began to see profitable returns, and several Filipino filmmakers were considered premier directors, like Gerardo de León, César Gallardo, Eddie Romero, and Cirio Santiago. *Roberta* (1951), considered the first blockbuster film of the Philippines, was a huge success at the box office. This was an unprecedented success, especially as the film was reportedly produced on a meager budget after its production studio's library was destroyed by a fire. War films and patriotic themes had been largely popular with the local audiences in the early fifties. By the end of the fifties, musicals, romantic and rural comedies, historical productions, and large action films became quite popular too. Technicolor also came to the country in this era, and many color features populated the local film market.



***Genghis Khan* and *Anak Dalita* were screened at International Film Festivals**

Source: IMDb and The Movie Database

Filipino films began to be screened at international festivals too. Manuel Conde's *Genghis Khan* (1952) made history as the first Asian film to be screened at the Venice and Cannes Film Festivals. This film inspired many remakes, including the Hollywood remake *The Conqueror* (1956), starring John Wayne. *Anak Dalita* (English title: *Child of Sorrow*) won Best Picture at the Asia-Pacific Film Festival. *The Line of Life* (1969) was also screened at the ASEAN Film Festival in Indonesia and the Berlin Film Festival. National awards like the Maria Clara Awards (later established as the FAMAS Awards), Luna Awards, and the Gawad Urian Awards were instituted, giving opportunities for regional films to be discovered.



**Lino Brocka is a Key Filipino Filmmaker**

Source: Cinéma de Demain

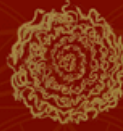
Many movie stars became widely popular in the late sixties and the seventies, with the era also seeing the emergence of many talented directors like Lino Brocka, Emmanuel Borlaza, Sat Vallarino, Leo Juesan, Leroy Salvador, Talyo Bacalso, and Fernando Alfon. Eric de Guia's *Perfumed Nightmare* (1977) won the International Critic's Prize at the Berlin Film Festival. The seventies and early eighties constitute what is widely referred to as the second golden age of Philippine cinema. Avant-garde filmmakers began to rise, and a new breed of young filmmakers emerged who sought to break apart from the conventions of mainstream cinema. This era also saw the release of the 1978 historical satire *Tadhana* (English title: *Destiny*), which was the first feature-length Filipino animated film. The Manila International Film Festival was held for the first time in 1981. Although the number of yearly film releases began to decline in the late eighties and throughout the nineties, this era was important as many female filmmakers began to rise, the most influential being Marilou Diaz-Abaya.



**Brillante Mendoza, Lav Diaz, and Joyce Bernal are Popular Contemporary Filipino Filmmakers**

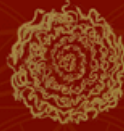
Source: The Movie Database, Unifrance, and Wikipedia

With the 2000s came a new wave of cinema in the country, with a special focus on digital and experimental films. Filmmakers like Lav Diaz, Brillante Mendoza, and Joyce Bernal became popular. The Cinemalaya and Cinemanila International Film Festivals were established. Many Filipino films won prizes at international film festivals, like the short film *Shadows* (2000) which won the Palme d'Or at Cannes, and *The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros* (2005), which won the Teddy Award for Best Feature at Berlin. Cinema in the Philippines has since flourished prosperously, becoming a leading player not only in Southeast Asia but also across the world.



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