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Diego Luna Is Ready for the Revolution

The *Andor* star on Jedi knights, living life without a plan, and why he's glad his *Star Wars* spin-off will end after two seasons: "I didn't see myself playing Cassian at 80 years old, almost in a wheelchair, going back to the same story over and over again."

BY TONI GARCÍA

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PHOTOGRAPH BY NINO MUÑOZ.

Diego Luna is one of Mexico's most internationally known actors, as well as one of the most popular stars in his own country. After his early years acting in Mexican soap operas, he went on to steal the spotlight

with his performance in *Y Tu Mamá También* (2001), which also served to raise the profile of director **Alfonso Cuarón**. From there, Luna has traveled a multifaceted path, working with indie royalty such as **Gus Van Sant** and **Harmony Korine**, mainstream giants like **Steven Spielberg** and **Kevin Costner**, venerable auteurs like **Woody Allen** and **Bill Condon**, and a good number of younger figures from the Mexican film world as well. His body of work is a testament to his versatility and maturity.

Luna is also known to be one of the most affable men in a profession that includes many difficult stars. He's directed short films, television series, videos, documentaries, and feature films. He has also produced more than 40 works, written screenplays, and even sung, without ever letting any of it go to his head.

The Mexican actor now strikes again with the second season of one of TV's most acclaimed recent series: *Andor*, premiering on Disney+ on April 22. Luna plays Cassian Andor, protagonist of a dark tale set in the *Star Wars* universe that has been described as "if **Ken Loach** had made a *Star Wars* movie." Loach, a cult British director, has devoted his entire life to films portraying class struggle, the challenges facing working-class families, and even the Spanish Civil War. Many consider him to be one of the most militant filmmakers of his generation.



NINO MUÑOZ

“Wow. Bringing up a guy like him, with such a distinguished career, to talk about *Andor*—I think I know where you’re going,” says Luna. “The communities [in his films] have always needed to tell their stories, and it has never been more important to tell these stories from the bottom up, as he often does. Right now the world is defined by a struggle for power, and this series talks about exactly that.”

Luna is no stranger to the world of the Jedi. His most commercial film to date, *Rogue One*—a critical as well as a popular success—is also set in the *Star Wars* universe, and many consider it the saga’s most unusual installment. “I think *Andor* wouldn’t exist without *Rogue One*,” says Luna. “I also think that *Rogue One* is exceptional in every way. *Andor* has a great plus, which is that you don’t have to have seen any of the *Star Wars* films to enjoy it. A number of people have told me, ‘I’m not interested in *Star Wars*, and I’ve never followed the movies. But I’ve seen *Andor* and I really like it.’ And that’s because if you like genres like political dramas, spy series, and mysteries, this is a series you can watch and enjoy without having to be a loyal follower of the saga.”

Andor found a place in the hearts of fans thanks to a story that skips clichés, instead describing a rebellion led by the galaxy’s forgotten and disinherited. The show feels enormously relevant. “I agree with that, but I’d add another thought,” Luna says. “This series would have been important 10 years ago and will be important 10 years from now, because it is a reflection on how communities can take control and fight for their destiny. It reflects on the responsibilities of being a citizen, which have long existed, are important now, and will continue to be in the future.



A scene from *Andor*. DES WILLIE / ©2024 LUCASFILM LTD & TM.



Luna as Cassian Andor in the 2016 film *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. JONATHAN OLLEY / ©WALT DISNEY STUDIOS MOTION PICTURES / LUCASFILM LTD. / CORTESÍA DE EVERETT COLLECTION (ROGUE ONE).

“The characters in *Andor*, just like real human beings, often exist in gray areas,” he continues. “We portray real people, people without hope. They’re all downtrodden, but there’s still this sense that something has to happen. We know Cassian will become a hero, but we know there may be more than one path to that conclusion. This is something I’ve said many times before: When we talk about revolution, the message we’re sending out is that any revolution starts with yourself.”

When I ask why a performer who came up through indie film agreed to something so far from his typical work, he explains: “I’ve been a *Star Wars* fan since I was a kid. I grew up with the first trilogy and became a fanatic. I played Jedi with my cousins, although I must admit that part of me was always drawn to the dark side. I can’t deny that.” He laughs. “I was the smallest of all my friends, and I went crazy playing *Star Wars*.

“But to answer your question, the director of *Rogue One* came to see me, and told me that he wanted to make a very particular *Star Wars* movie, with a different style of acting and hyperrealistic tone bordering on naturalism. He wanted to create something that was close to being almost like a documentary in its tone. ‘I want them to improvise, to take over the characters, the dynamics between them. I’d love to feel like I’m watching something like *Y Tu Mamá También*,’ he told us. At that moment I thought, Well, maybe this is a role for me.”

But at the time, the actor didn’t know there was a catch. “When he approached me, he was suggesting that I audition to be in the film, but he still had to convince everyone else in charge. And then began an endless series of auditions and readings. In the end, everything went well. People enjoyed that it was different, darker, more mature. That you couldn’t watch it with a six-year-old because the ending was bleak. That was the big difference. Six-year-olds could watch *Star Wars*, I think.” But *Rogue One*, he says, went places that the other nine films in the franchise did not. Luna sees *Andor* as similar to its precursor, “because we didn’t have to prove anything.”



Luna with Gael García Bernal and Maribel Verdú in *Y tu mamá también* (2001).

CORTESÍA DE EVERETT COLLECTION (Y TU MAMÁ TAMBIÉN)

Luna's acting career began early. As the son of set designer Alejandro Luna and costume designer Fiona Alexander, he easily slipped into the worlds of stage and screen. When he was only 13 years old, he was already acting in a telenovela called *El Abuelo y Yo* (*Grandfather and I*) from the Televisa network. He joined it after appearing in plays for years.

“When you’ve been in this profession for as long as I have, there are many things that you stop worrying about. You don’t have as much stress, and problems seem less important,” he says. When asked if he has a plan for his career, Luna doesn’t hesitate: “There is no plan. In this profession, it’s almost impossible to follow a plan and it’s often even dangerous to think that you might have one. Of course, when I was 20 years old, I had an incredible plan.” Luna laughs again. “Then things

happen, and the plan fades away. Now I don't think about it anymore. I think about doing things that I feel really comfortable doing. That's my top priority."

Luna's father died in 2022. The actor has no doubts about the role his father played in shaping Luna's future career. "My dad brought me to the theater and let me see everything about that world. That life has surrounded me until I've reached the point where I am today." His immersion into the world of drama also involved another great figure: the legendary Mexican playwright **Luis de Tavira**, who was Luna's mentor and one of the forces influencing his decision, at the age of 15, to become serious about acting.

"My father had his doubts and, of course, I also had my own, but I learned a lot about myself and about how you get ahead and how you face problems that come your way. When you're very young, you see things with the perspective that age gives you and that perspective changes as you get older. That's something you discover along the way, and I discovered it earlier than I probably would have otherwise."



Luna, Kevin Costner, and Robert Duvall in *Open Range* (2003).

TOUCHSTONE/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION (OPEN RANGE)

Luna’s love for theater led him to television; from there he jumped to the movies. “My life revolved around acting,” he says. “I had a lot of free time to explore that world, and theaters and sets became my real home. I would spend days in the theater; there was no place else like it. I’m not talking only about rehearsals, the magic of the actors performing their crafts, or the stage when it is all lit up and ready for a performance. I’m also talking about those moments when you could see how everything fell into place, how a play came together, how it was created. I have never forgotten how I fell in love with the theater.”

As an actor, director, and producer, Luna has also always been a determined activist. Proof of this can be seen in his production company, La Corriente del Golfo (translation: Gulf Stream), a project he started together with a friend whom he calls “*mi hermano*” (“my brother”)—**Gael García Bernal**. The company is dedicated to addressing a range of

social problems. They launched it with a statement signed by both of them: “The Gulf Stream is an ocean current that rises from the Gulf of Mexico and reaches the North Atlantic, giving a temperate climate to a region that would otherwise be barren tundra. We adopt the name of this global current to emphasize how life can give us freedom, in all its meanings, as it flows like an ocean current.”

Luna and García Bernal have long supported causes such as ending violence against women and threats to Mexican journalists, who often work in conditions where violence is a given. “I think the best way to explain it is that we let ourselves be carried along by that current. We want to get to where these stories are,” Luna says.

Andor is not a conventional series, which is precisely why Luna accepted its starring role. “*Andor* talks about social issues that have always concerned me. I think that if a film or series doesn’t reflect the world we live in and if it doesn’t relate to who we are, it doesn’t matter. For me, what I want to do is get involved in things that are important to me.” The Disney+ series has also provided him with a more realistic perspective on his profession: “After the success of *Rogue One*”—which grossed more than a billion dollars worldwide—“I thought that from that moment on I could do whatever I wanted...and, well, no,” he says with a laugh. “With *Andor*, I learned that you can push smaller projects and allow them to grow without setting any limits on them.”



Luna and Elle Fanning in *A Rainy Day in New York* (2019).

JESSICA MIGLIO/©GRAVIER PRODUCTIONS/CORTESÍA DE EVERETT COLLECTION (DÍA DE LLUVIA EN NUEVA YORK)

Despite a career that now spans more than three decades, many still know Luna best from *Y Tu Mamá También*, which he starred in alongside García Bernal and **Maribel Verdú**. “I don’t mind at all that the film always comes up in every conversation, because I think *Y Tu Mamá También* remains one of the best films I’ve ever made,” he says. “I was lucky to be able to make it in my own country, with my best friend, and with an incredible director. Also, even though I was already known in Mexico and had been working there for years, it was the moment when my career took off.

“We went to Venice, then to San Sebastian. It was a very crazy year, but it was definitely the moment when things changed. Also, Alfonso Cuarón played a fundamental part in helping me understand the medium. He taught me to see cinema in a different way, and sparked in me, for

the first time, a need to experiment with directing and to start producing films too. It was the beginning of a journey that has brought me to where I am today.”

Luna smiles when asked if he ever feared that *Andor* would end after a single season, as so many other streaming projects have. “This will surprise you, but I originally signed on for five seasons. And then one day I thought, But, Diego, how the hell are you going to do this for five seasons?” he says. “So I sat down with Tony”—that would be **Tony Gilroy**, *Andor*’s showrunner—“and told him that I didn’t see myself playing Cassian at 80 years old, almost in a wheelchair, going back to the same story over and over again. Tony suggested we do one more season, but make the second season like four movies. That way we could close it the way it deserves to end.

“And you know what?” Luna laughs. “He convinced me.”

This interview was originally published by [Vanity Fair Spain](#). It was translated by John Newton.