

PEOPLE

A table for two



I have dined with him many times – me in the office of my kitchen, and him on the TV screen-, and so when we met face-to-face it seemed to me that I had always known him. He said that he is very self-conscious, that being an actor makes him feel free, but I don't know whether to believe him because once he gets talking he even tells jokes. His latest roles (*Lope*, *Ben Hur*) demonstrate that he is serious about cinema. The teen idol has grown up.

Written by PATRICIA VILLALOBOS
Photos: FEDE SERRA
Stylist: GABRIELLA NAEVE

Where should we meet up?

In the Hotel Ada, Madrid, at 2 PM, with

MIGUEL_ÁNGEL MUÑOZ

A demonstration in the middle of Madrid. Serrano, Alcalá, Cibeles, all the streets are roped off. I am late for my appointment. Help! Half an hour later I arrive at the terrace of the restaurant Agora in the Hotel Ada, and I breath a sigh of relief: it turns out that famous people have to deal with the same traffic jams as the rest of the mortals. In a little while, Miguel Ángel appears – yes, it is Rober, from *Un paso adelante*, the one I sighed for in my teen years,-- apologizing for being late. Traffic makes everyone very nervous, but a glass of wine and the roofs of the Gran Vía as decoration are enough to create an atmosphere.

THE FIRST COURSE

“YOU WANT TO BE AN ACTOR? YOU HAD BETTER HAVE A PLAN B”

He is even better in person. That is what I am thinking while he takes his seat, intending to start on the Foie Gras with Oporto Gelatin that the chef has prepared for us. He is a little bit quiet on arrival, but he loosens up for a little while telling me how as a 10-year-old boy when he only was thinking about kicking around a ball and playing with the junior league of Real Madrid, he wound up in front of the camera. “One of my

mother's friends who was an actress suggested that I do a casting call for a commercial. I liked it, I did more tests, and in 15 days they had chosen me out of one thousand children for the starring role in *El palomo cojo*, by Jaime de Armiñan.” So you learned how to act almost as a game. “Either you have a natural talent or you don't.” And training? “It is important because it gives you more tools to work with but it is not an indispensable requirement” she says, and he enumerates the great actors from whom he has learned: Paco Rabal, Carman Maura, Amparo....



“I like talented women, even if they are ugly. How do I win them over? By making them laugh.”



... Baró... *"For now it's not going badly. Since I started, I have spent 10 years without vacation!"* And aren't you afraid that your luck will run out? Not having a firm contract is probably a problem for paying the mortgage... *"Normally it isn't enough. My situation is not normal. For this reason I suggest that you have a plan B. Although you want to be an actor, study, make sure you have a job and economic stability and approach acting as your hobby until you can make a start."*

For his part, he is unstoppable. After releasing *Lope*, where he fights a duel with Alberto Amman, we will see him in the TV movie *Ben Hur*, a super-production with a budget of 22 million dollars, from the director of *The Sopranos*, and *The Tudors*. It is the first time that you work in English. Did you need a crash course to refresh the bit about 'My tailor is rich,' or does your generation of actors come well prepared? *"I do a pretty good job, but at any rate, I was trembling!"*

THE SECOND COURSE

"THANKS TO MY PARENTS I DIDN'T BECOME AN IDIOT"

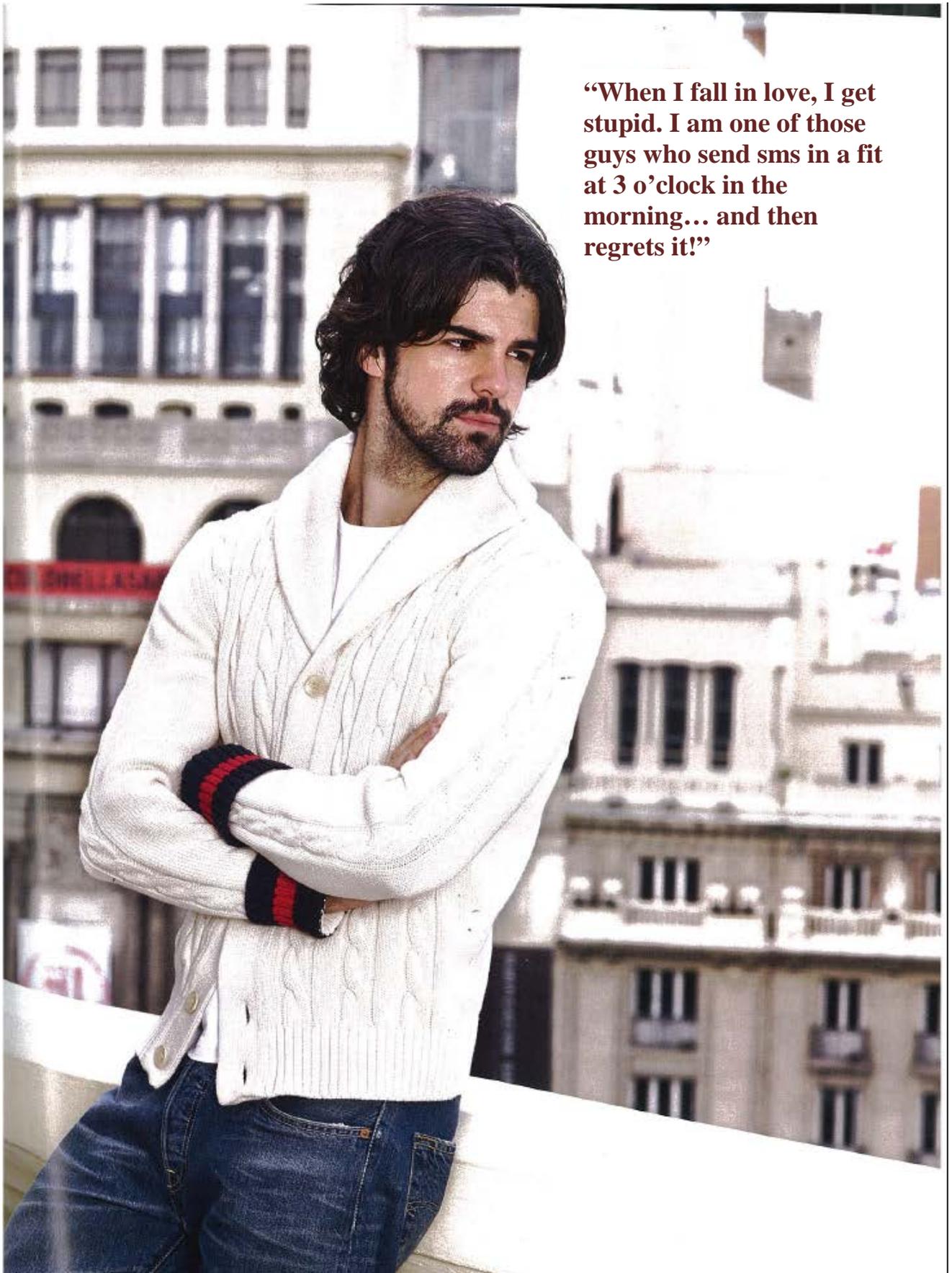
The wind is making this lunch difficult for Miguel Ángel, who has to fix his hair again and again (and again and again, I have to tell all). Are you conceited? *"I get dressed up when it is appropriate. I get angry if I go to an awards ceremony or a party and I see people dressed anyway they felt like it."* And I wonder, does he have more creams and lotions in his bathroom than I do? *"I hate creams. When I started in television they gave me samples of everything, I followed the advice of the make-up artists and I took good care of myself...I was even about to have laser hair removal! I had a bit of an absurd moment, but it didn't last long, thank goodness."* (Note to the reader: while he says this he lifts up his sweater a little bit to offer proof that he has not submitted to the laser...).

I look him up and down – since trust has already been established – and I bear witness that he is one of those guys who doesn't skip the gym: *"This*

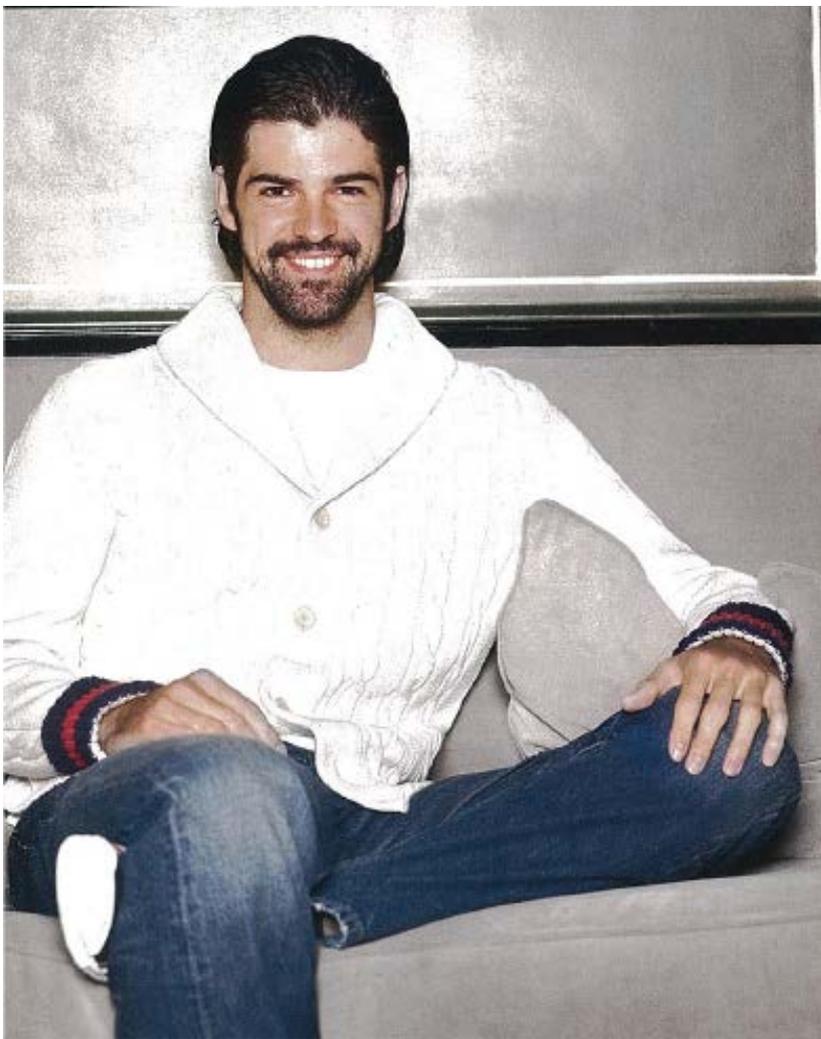
Personal menu

- He was born in Madrid 27 years ago
- He debuted in cinema at 12 years of age, although he became famous in TV series such as *Al salir de clase*, *Un paso adelante* and *El síndrome de Ulises*.
- His new releases? After *Lope*, with Luis Tosar, Pilar López de Ayala and Leonor Watling, we will see him in the TV movie *Ben Hur*, a remake of the international production where he works in English for the first time.
- He just filmed *No controles*, a romantic comedy by Borja Cobeaga with Unax Ugalde.

is going to sound ridiculous, but I don't do gymnastics!" You have got to be kidding! I insist. *"I play a lot of sports: I play soccer, I ride horses, I do wake board, snow... and now I want to learn kite surf. I used to go to the gym when I was 18 because I had to keep in shape for Un paso adelante and, although it sounds like a lie, I live off the proceeds, I have good genes."* I am probably looking at him with the same expression that I use for the models when they confess to me that their favorite food is hamburgers with potatoes, because he keeps explaining: *"I am a normal guy, I am not very well-built. I am very sinewy, and the veins stand out on my arms. That is very deceptive!"* If I had known it when I had his photos under the carpet... Miguel Ángel was so popular as a teenager that a few times they had to take him out of a discotheque so that he would not be attacked. *"Now, if I stand at the gate of a school, I get into trouble, but it is not the same. I no longer receive 50,000 letters each day. I got used to this situation, and I didn't consider it important. Now I think about it and it seems very serious."* He says it more with an expression of amazement than with self-satisfaction. I am very glad to see this. It can't be easy to be a normal guy if the girls break out crying with emotion when they see you. *"I am sure that at some point I was a repulsive guy, but I have to thank my parents, because they slapped me pretty often so that I wouldn't turn into an idiot."* . . .



“When I fall in love, I get stupid. I am one of those guys who send sms in a fit at 3 o’clock in the morning... and then regrets it!”



After the success of *Lope*, we will see him in the comedy *No controles* and in the TV movie *Ben Hur*.

The truth is this guy is nice, likeable, and polite... This could seem like a poor description, but if you are *out there*, then you know that there aren't many of this sort. *"At some point I passed from not being able to walk down the street to them not even looking at me. And I didn't understand why! Popularity doesn't mean anything. The day that they say you are good-looking it is a big rush, and when they call you idiot – which happens quite a lot – it is depressing. If I didn't maintain my distance, I would go crazy."*

FOR DESERT

"I AM A ROMANTIC AND A BROTHERLY TYPE [PAGAFANTAS]¹"

My stomach is almost satisfied, but my curiosity is eager for more information. I have always wondered whether actors are good liars in real life. *"You don't have to be a professional, there are people who tell lies that deserve an Oscar. I hate it, and I have had big disappointments with friends who have tricked me and I can't stand it. What I like best is honesty, and I am sincere even if this means that I offend you."*

If that is the case, then let's get something straight: Do you have much luck with women? (Laughter) *"No way! Less than what people think."* They all say that... Surely you have at some point used a phrase from a script to sweet-talk a woman. *"I used to, I admit it. But now I regret it, that is what boring guys do!"* What your draw then? *"I am funny, I make the girls laugh a lot."* What sort of girls? (I am getting close.) *"What makes me fall in love with a woman is talent, even if she is very ugly. Whether she is an actress, painter ... or a journalist. If she is talented, I love it."* (Wow, I don't know whether to think he means me, *even if she is ugly...*) Well, in more down-to-earth terms, what do you notice first? *"The lips."*

Miguel Ángel was in a relationship – only confirmed by stolen photos – with his fellow cast member on *UPA*, Mónica Cruz, for two years. Since then, his official girlfriend has been unknown. He knows very well the (annoying) refrain *"I don't talk about my personal life,"* but I also know what my job is. As intense as the work on set is, would it be easy to fall in love with a member of the cast?

The crumbs on the tablecloth

- **IN MADRID YOU WILL FIND HIM IN:** "El tulipán (General Díaz Porlier, 59). The owners are very nice, the food is excellent and the price is unbelievable."
- **HE ADMIRES:** "My old friends, Perico, Iván, Sol... This is true love, not only your partner."
- **A BOOK:** "*Enneagram*, by Carmen Durán and Antonio Catalán. A study of the different types of personality that helps me get to know myself and create characters."
- **A BAD HABIT:** "Quite a few of them! I spend the day eating junk food, and I am wild about wine and ham."
- **A RECORD:** "Y., and the latest from Bebe."
- **HE WOULD NEVER FORGIVE:** "Unjustified betrayal."
- **AN ANTI-STRESS PLAN:** "Paintball. The other day I organized a battle with 60 people. We were shooting at each other for 6 hours!"
- **ON HIS DAY OFF:** "I treat myself to a big breakfast, I train with the veterans from Real Madrid in Valdebebas, and then I go to the movies or the theater. If it is with a girl, then better! But it isn't always that way..."

"You spend so much time with her that if there is chemistry it is not difficult. We work with the emotions, we kiss each other we touch each other, we hug each other... it could very well happen."

But don't jump to conclusions, because here my friend warns me that he doesn't fall in love easily. *"But I would like to, because it is wonderful to be in love, I am working on it!"* Could it be that you have some *unresolved sexual tension*? (And it is not they I have gone completely crazy, I ask him this in allusion to the movie of the same name that was released before the summer). He laughs. *"No, right now I am happy, I have it all resolved."*

Your next movie project is a romantic comedy. Did you do a lot of crazy things in the name of love? *"Of course, when I fall in love I get stupid. I am a romantic and a brotherly type."* And a victim, like everyone, of the mobile phone: *"Who hasn't sent the typical message at 3 o'clock in the morning saying 'miss you'? It seems to you like a great idea and right as you push the button to send, you think, please don't let her read this! Well, I am one of those."*

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¹ N.T. *Pagafantas*: man who will continue buy soft drinks for a woman even though she is not romantically interested in him.