

There are reasons to love Elpidio Valdés

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Elpidio Valdés, the most popular of our cartoons, has lost his father. The death of giant Juan Padrón — his creator — leaves a massive hole in Cuban cinema, which is only alleviated with the strength of his legacy. Why has this friendly Mambí Colonel marked millions of Cubans, to the point Elpidio Valdés is regarded as indisputable symbol of our identity? Here are a few reasons:

He was — and still is — a down-to-earth kind of hero. Brave as any hero, but he is actually more humane in fiction than others in real life. Elpidio Valdés is basically sympathetic, but he can be irritable at times. He is handsome and martial somehow; but he can star laughable situations. He is sometimes too bold. He disobeys orders and later regrets. He is not a flawless hero. No one in real life is.

The adventures he is involved in are perfectly contextualized in our national history. He is a mambí, a fighter for our independence. He is someone who does his duty. And everything is being narrated without demagoguery, didacticism, with no propaganda. Its essence as a children's anime is never overlooked, as its most important goal is to

entertain.

We also learned to love him thanks to the secondary characters: Palmiche, Maria Silvia, Pepito, and Eutelia. And we love him thanks to his antagonists as well: Resóplez, Andaluz, Cetáceo..., or those Cuban volunteer militiamen so proud of their indignity: Mediacara, Cortico (the Drunkard)...Juan Padrón was always certain that for a hero to shine brighter, he needs worthy antagonists.

And we embraced him. There were, of course, other cartoons. But Elpidio Valdés was everywhere in television, magazines, school bags, notebooks' covers, kiddy parks, t-shirts...He is still very much alive sharing prime time with other Cuban and foreign counterparts.

Juan Padrón has passed away. But he secured the immortality of his legacy, as a cultural heritage of the nation. We will keep on fighting with machetes along with Elpidio Valdés and his troop.

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