

THE MEXICAN FILM BULLETIN

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 1

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2013

VOLUME 19 BEGINS!

Another year (our 19th!) of *The Mexican Film Bulletin* begins. Hopefully we will maintain our bi-monthly schedule, and will supply news, reviews, and articles about Mexican cinema from the silent era to the present day.

If you are reading this in paper format, you should probably join the modern world, save some trees, and read *MFB* online:

www.terpconnect.umd.edu/~dwilt/mexnews.html



OBITUARIES

JOAQUÍN CORDERO

Joaquín Cordero, one of the few surviving performers from the Golden Age of Mexican cinema, died at his home in Mexico City on 19 February 2013. Cordero's wife

Alma had passed away in 2012, and the actor had reportedly been depressed and in poor health since then.

Joaquín Cordero was born in Puebla de Zaragoza, México, in August 1922. He spent three years studying in a seminary, then attended law school, before finally choosing acting as a career in the mid-1940s. After a few years playing bit parts, he rose to

supporting *galán* roles and finally moved into leading-man parts in the 1950s. He would also occasionally take villainous roles, as in *Cerebro del mal* (1958) and *Museo del horror* (1963), and in later years alternated leads with supporting parts as fathers, grandfathers, etc.

Cordero was a very prolific actor, working in numerous films, plays, radio dramas, *telenovelas* and *videohomes* during his long career. Although his last regular role was on the 2008 *telenovela* "Fuego en la sangre," Cordero did appear in the multi-story feature film *Los inadaptados* (2011) (Beatriz Aguirre, another Golden Age veteran, is also in the cast).

Cordero won a Best Co-Starring Actor Ariel for *Los dos huérfanos* (1950), and in 2012 received a medal from the actors' union ANDA for 75 years of service. He is survived by three children from his marriage to Alma Guzmán.



LILIA DEL VALLE

Actress Lilia del Valle died on 7 January 2013 in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic; she was 84 years old. Lilián Welker Gundlach was born in April 1928 (some sources give 1931) in Mexico City. After a bit part in *Hijos de la mala vida* (1946), Lilia made her starring debut in the 1948 version of *Allá en el Rancho Grande* opposite Jorge Negrete, and over the next few years worked in a number of popular films, including *Peregrina*, *Las tres alegres comadres* and *Las interesadas* (both with Amalia

Aguilar and Lilia Prado), *La bruja*, and *Kid Tabaco*. However, her screen appearances dwindled in the latter half of the Fifties and after her marriage in 1960 (she was married three times overall), she retired from the screen (returning only once, for a cameo role in *La recta final*, 1964). An art student in her youth, Lilia del Valle returned to painting after



her retirement from acting, and spent the rest of her life enjoying her family and her art.

[Personal note: I had the pleasure of speaking to Lilia del Valle once, years ago, when she called to thank me for writing a letter in support of her application for U.S. citizenship. She was warm and gracious to me and it was a thrill to talk to her, albeit briefly.]

Rogelio Agrasánchez Jr. discusses Lilia del Valle's career and his personal encounters with her here:

<http://www.mexfilmarchive.com/documents/65.html>



MARIA RIVAS

Actress María Rivas died on 14 January 2013; she was 81 years old. Rivas, whose full name was María de los Dolores Rivas Diéguez, was born in Cataluña, Spain, in August 1931. After appearing in a handful of films in her



native land, Rivas met and married actor Carlos Baena, who had been born in Spain but worked in Mexico. Rivas relocated to Mexico and began to work in films and television there. After her divorce from Baena, Rivas

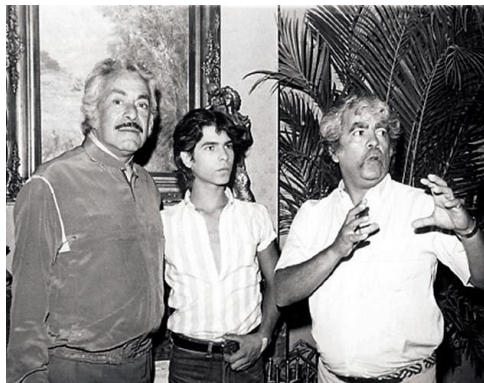
married Luis de Llano Palmer, a television producer. She had one son by her first husband and two children by de Llano Palmer.

María Rivas made her Mexican cinema debut in *La máscara de carne* (1956). Her other films included *Miércoles de ceniza*, *El Jinete Solitario en El valle de los solitarios*, *Flor marchita*, and *La maestra inolvidable*. She also worked on numerous television series from the 1960s through the late 1990s, and appeared in various stage presentations.



RAUL ARAIZA

Director Raúl Araiza died on 8 January 2013 at his home in Veracruz; he had been suffering from prostate cancer. Raúl Cadena Araiza was born in the state of



Veracruz in September 1935.

Originally a stage actor, Raúl Araiza moved into direction and became involved in the television industry in

the late 1950s. He spent many years working for Televisa, directing popular *telenovelas* and mini-series like “La tormenta,” “Los caudillos,” “El carruaje,” and “El maleficio.” Beginning in the mid-1970s, Araiza began to direct feature films as well, including *Cascabel* (his debut), *En la tormenta*, *Lagunilla, mi barrio*, *Fuego en el mar*, *El maleficio II* (see on-set photo above—Ernesto Alonso, the director's son Armando Araiza, and Raúl Araiza), *Toña Machetes*, and *Amor a la medida*.

Raúl Araiza had been married to actress Norma Herrera. Their two sons, Raúl Jr. and Armando Araiza, both became popular young actors in the 1980s.



CHAVA REYES

Salvador “Chava” Reyes Monteón, one of the most famous *fútbol* players in 1950s–1960s Mexico, died on 29 December 2012. Reyes, born in Guadalajara, Jalisco, in 1936, played for the Guadalajara “Chivas” club from 1953 through 1967.

Chava Reyes appeared in the 1962 films *Las Chivas Rayadas* and *Los fenómenos del fútbol*, as one of four sons of Sara García.



OLGA ZUBARRY

Argentine actress Olga Zubarry died on 15 December 2012. Olga Adela Zubarrain was born in Buenos Aires in October 1929. She began acting in cinema at the age of 13, and eventually appeared in more than 70 films and television series before retiring in 1997. During her long career, Zubarry appeared in 3 Mexican-Argentine co-productions, all shot in her home country. In 1954, she worked in the Argentine episode of the Spanish-Mexican-Argentina co-production *Tres citas con el destino*. She also had roles in *Somos novios* (1968), and *Luna caliente* (1984).



2012 BOX-OFFICE REPORT

Boxofficemojo.com indicates 247 feature films were released theatrically in Mexico in 2012. Approximately 8% were Mexican movies or co-productions with Mexico. This is a significant reduction compared to 2011, when more than 23% of the releases were made in Mexico. Also, the top-grossing Mexican film of 2012 was *Colosio: El Asesinato*, in 47th place overall and a \$4.2 million gross, whereas in 2011 *Don Gato y su pandilla* earned about \$8 million and was the 24th most popular picture of the year.

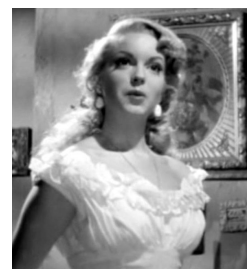
The highest-earning Mexican movies of 2012 were:

<i>Colosio: El Asesinato</i>	\$4.2 million
<i>For Greater Glory (Cristiada)</i> , which some sources indicate was a U.S.-Mexican co-production, although it was shot in English	\$3.9 million
<i>De panzazo</i> (documentary)	\$3.6 million
<i>Suave patria</i>	\$3.4 million
<i>La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas</i>	\$2.3 m
<i>Aquí entre nos</i> (co-prod)	\$2.3 million
<i>Después de Lucía</i> (co-prod)	\$2.3 million
<i>El cielo en tu mirada</i>	\$2.2 million
<i>Viaje de generación</i>	\$1 million
<i>El Santos vs. la Tetona Mendoza</i> (anim.)	\$946K
<i>Hecho en México</i> (doc.)	\$891K

In comparison, the top-grossing films overall in Mexico in 2012 were *The Avengers* (\$61.7 million), *Ice Age: Continental Drift* (\$46.8 million), and *The Dark Knight Rises* (\$31.8 million).



Peregrina [Wanderer]
(CLASA Films Mundiales, 1950) *Prod*: Salvador Elizondo; *Assoc Prod*: José Luis Celis; *Dir-Scr*: Chano Urueta; *Adapt*: Agustín Yáñez, José Luis Celis; *Story*: Agustín Yáñez; *Photo*: Víctor Herrera; *Music*: Jorge Pérez H.; *Song*: Ricardo Palmerín; *Prod Chief*: Antonio Guerrero Tello;



Asst Dir: Jorge López Portillo; *Film Ed:* Jorge Bustos; *Art Dir:* Jesús Bracho; *Makeup:* Román Juárez; *Dialog Rec:* Luis Fernández; *Music Rec:* Rafael Ruiz Esparza

Cast: Jorge Mistral (*Miguel Obregón*), Lilia del Valle (*Mariana O'Neill*), Carlos López Moctezuma (*don Remigio*), Charles Rooner (*don Tomás O'Neill*), Nora Veryán (*Lupe*), Joaquín Cordero (*Marcos Obregón*), Maruja Grifell (*Bruna*), Manuel Trejo Morales (*Cástulo?*), José Pardavé (*Margarito*), Rogelio Fernández (*henchman of don Remigio*), Emilio Garibay (*peón*), Ángel Infante (*peón*), Chel López (*peón*), Hernán Vera (*judge*), Victorio Blanco (*guest*), Elodia Hernández (*guest*), María Cecilia Leger (*doña Soledad*), ?Manuel Sánchez Navarro (*judge's ass't.*)

Notes: despite excellent direction, fine production values, and a strong cast, *Peregrina* is not a particularly good film, undone by a weak script, an overdose of



melodramatic performances, and poor pacing.

Don Tomás, the owner of the *hacienda* "Irlanda" (Ireland), promised his daughter Mariana's hand in

marriage to one of the Obregón brothers, sons of his old friend and neighbour (well, their *haciendas* are a week's travel apart). Mariana returns to Mexico from Europe and meets the younger brother Marcos—they agree to wed. However, the superstitious *peones* in the region believe Mariana—whom they refer to as *la blonda* due to her fair skin and blonde hair—has brought an evil spirit called a *nahual* with her. Miguel Obregón believes bandits are using the *nahual* tale to steal cattle and commit other crimes. He goes on a hunt for the alleged monster, said to inhabit the body of a coyote. He runs into the outlaws, who are secretly led by don Remigio, another *hacendado* who covets Mariana for himself; with the aid of Marcos and men from their *hacienda*, the bandits are driven off, but Marcos is wounded. Miguel agrees to visit "Irlanda" and inform don Tomás and Mariana what occurred. On the way, he kills a coyote and identifies it as the *nahual*, but is injured himself in another encounter with don Remigio.



Miguel recovers at the *hacienda* of don Tomás. He and Mariana fall in love, but he refuses to betray his brother, even substituting for him in a proxy wedding ceremony. Afterwards, Miguel, Mariana, and a group of their men depart for the Obregón *hacienda*. Mariana tries to delay the trip as long as possible; she and Miguel nearly

succumb to their passion, but restrain themselves. Learning Remigio and his outlaws are nearby, Miguel sends Mariana and the others on their way, then confronts the villain in a machete duel...

When Mariana arrives at the *hacienda*, she tells Marcos that she loves Miguel, but fears he is dead. However, a short time later a badly-wounded Miguel appears, and convinces Marcos that he did not betray his trust. Miguel dies. After he is buried, Mariana departs.



Peregrina starts off strongly, but bogs down in the middle and becomes excessively protracted towards the end. Carlos López Moctezuma as don Remigio is introduced in dramatic fashion, wearing a black outfit, a large black sombrero, and a black cape, in contrast to the light-coloured clothing of everyone else in the sequence. He doesn't do anything sinister, but clearly he's the villain. Unfortunately, after his brief clash with Miguel, Remigio vanishes completely from the movie until the climax. Virtually all of the footage between these appearances is pure romantic melodrama: Miguel and Mariana fall in love, struggle against their feelings, express their love, struggle some more, on and on. Their behaviour becomes ludicrously over-

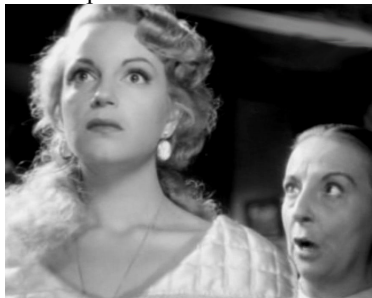


wrought at times. For example, during the proxy-wedding, the judge asks Mariana if she wants to marry Marcos. She pauses. Cut to don Tomás, looking anxious. She says yes. Then the judge asks Miguel (standing in for Marcos) if he wants to marry Mariana. He pauses. *Another* closeup of don Tomás looking panicked. Miguel says yes. Don Tomás looks relieved. Even more prolonged and hammy are the confrontations at the conclusion, first Mariana's confession to Marcos, then Marcos berating her, then Marcos berating his injured brother, then Miguel's dying declaration of fealty to his brother and eternal love for Mariana, it just goes on and on and on....

This is all too bad, because the *nahual* concept and Mariana's reputation as a harbinger of evil could have been developed into an interesting picture, and even the melodrama could have been improved upon by adding Remigio to the mix. The "love triangle" between Miguel, Mariana, and Marcos is weak because Marcos is physically separated from the other two for most of the movie, lessening the dramatic impact.

Chano Urueta doesn't pull too many of his attention-grabbing directorial tricks in *Peregrina*, choosing instead

to turn in a very fine, stylish work. Although the majority of the film's exteriors were shot on location--and there are a number of very excellent images, impressive landscapes, etc.--several night sequences were shot on studio "exteriors" in which Urueta and cinematographer Víctor Herrera use atmospheric lighting, fog, and other techniques quite effectively.



The performances are variable. Jorge Mistral, Lilia del Valle, and Joaquín Cordero chew the scenery much of the time, but at least part of this can be attributed to the flamboyant nature of the dialogue they've been given. Lilia del Valle, her hair dyed blonde, looks marvelous, by the way. Nora Veryán also over-acts, as the servant girl who loves Miguel and spreads scary tales about *la blonda* at every opportunity. On the positive side, Carlos López Moctezuma is fine, and Charles Rooner plays a sympathetic character, something he wasn't often allowed to do (one wouldn't say that he seems especially *Irish*, however).

Peregrina is nice to look at, but it can't deliver the entertainment value promised by the first 15 or 20 minutes.



La máscara de carne [The Mask of Flesh]



(Radeant Films, 1956)
Exec Prod: Raúl de Anda Jr.; *Dir-Adapt:* Raúl de Anda; *Story:* Ramón Obón; *Photo:* Ignacio Torres; *Music:* Sergio Guerrero; *Prod Mgr:* José L. Murillo; *Prod Chief:* Luis Sánchez Tello; *Asst Dir:* Carlos Villatoro; *Film Ed:* Pedro Velázquez; *Art Dir:* José Rodríguez Granada; *Makeup:* Rosa Guerrero; *Color Tech:* Francisco Gómez; *Dialog Rec:* Ernest

Caballero; *Music Rec:* Jesús González; *Re-rec:* Enrique Rodríguez; *Sound Ed:* Teodilo Bustos Jr.; *Union:* STPC; Eastmancolor, Mexiscope

Cast: Agustín de Anda (*Raúl*), María Rivas (*Luz María González*), Víctor Parra (*Javier López "El Figurín"*), José Elías Moreno (*Arturo*), José Torvay (*don Matías*), Amparo Arozamena (*Lulú Lamar*), Antonio Raxel (*Dr. Hoffmann*), José L. Murillo (*police official*), Guillermo A. Bianchi (*owner of nightclub*), Fernando Curiel (*Jarocho*), Armando Arreola (*don Gabriel*), José Luis Caro (*doctor*), Elena

Luquín, José Pardavé (*guitar player*), Salvador Quiroz (*don Pepe*), Pedro Vargas (*himself*), Humberto Rodríguez (*sanatorium guard*), ?Armando Gutiérrez (*gangster*)

Notes: although slightly over-long and loaded with the type of bizarre coincidences and illogical events common to most melodramas, *La máscara de carne* is a generally entertaining film.

In Guadalajara, bargirl María is abused by her pimp Javier when she tries to sneak away. However, a short time later he changes his mind, buys her a bus ticket, and tells her she can go home to her father in the capital. Unbeknownst to María, Javier has agreed to smuggle some stolen jewelry to Mexico City for gangster Jarocho, and has hidden the loot in her suitcase. [One would think there would be a simpler, more secure way to ship the merchandise, but...I guess not.] However, María learns her father has been sent to a sanatorium in the countryside; when she arrives, she discovers he's been dead for six months. That night, in a driving rainstorm, she tries to flag down a passing car, causing it to swerve off the road into a ditch. The driver is Raúl, a nightclub singer taking a brief vacation to recover from laryngitis. Raúl and María take shelter for the night in a nearby cabin, the home of hermit don Gabriel. The older man thinks they're married. Deciding to stay in the cabin for a few days, Raúl and María fall in love. Javier and Jarocho show up to retrieve the stolen jewels, but are arrested instead. [How did the crooks know María was staying in don Gabriel's isolated cabin? Also, it's logical that the police followed them there, but after Javier and Jarocho are arrested, they all drive off in one car—so apparently either the crooks or the police walked to the vicinity of the cabin.]



managing, don Matías, but Matías becomes angry when María pays their back rent with money she apparently got by sleeping with a wealthy visitor. María reveals her secret to him: she is only pretending to be blind so she can stay with Raúl, who would otherwise be too self-conscious about his facial injuries. The man who

Raúl and María wed, but an automobile accident one night (Raúl is apparently not a very good driver at all) leaves María blind and Raúl horribly disfigured. They move to a *barrio* of Mexico City, where a masked Raúl futilely attempts to find work. María is befriended by their apartment



loaned María the rent money is Arturo, a friend of her late father.

Raúl gets a job singing in don Pepe's cabaret: he wears a plastic devil mask to conceal his features. [It's unclear what sort of work he was seeking earlier.] One night he's introduced to Dr. Hoffmann, a plastic surgeon who offers to operate on Raúl's face at no charge (for the publicity). Meanwhile, Arturo hires María to sing in his club (much nicer than don Pepe's). [The only explanation he gives is that he heard her sing *one* time before, when her father was alive. So she must be talented enough to become a headline performer at a fancy nightclub, right?] She needs money because Dr. Hoffmann's apparent altruism is a sham: María is paying him to restore Raúl's face to its former state. When Hoffmann asks for the rest of his fee, Arturo demands María sleep with him in exchange for the money. She is spared this humiliation when Lulú, Arturo's discarded lover, shoots him to death.



Dr. Hoffmann operates successfully on Raúl, but confesses the truth about his fee: María had given him a check signed by Arturo, then vanished. She's actually hiding in the apartment of don Matías, waiting for the results of Raúl's surgery, then intends to flee (she's unaware Lulú has been arrested for Arturo's murder, and fears she's wanted by the police). Javier turns up for one last attempt to get his hands on the stolen jewels, but is shot by the police. Raúl and María reconcile.

As some of the comments above indicate, *La máscara de carne* is rife with contrived situations. To be fair, the plot twists are not telegraphed in advance. I'd seen the film once, years ago, but remembered nothing of the plot, and both María's fake-blindness and Dr. Hoffmann's fake-charity operation fooled me (sorry if I spoiled the surprises for you). The gimmick of a complete amateur suddenly becoming a star singer/dancer is a familiar one in Mexican cinema, although María's case is slightly more egregious than most, since—prior to this point—there has been literally no hint that she has any musical talent.

Speaking of musical talent, Agustín de Anda apparently did his own singing in the film. I say this because he's really bad (and not intentionally bad, like Susan Alexander in *Citizen Kane*), and you wouldn't dub in someone else singing badly. After Raúl's



first number (which he performs while wearing a hilarious sparkly jacket), he tells the nightclub owner that he's battling laryngitis. However, this is not his excuse for a

poor performance, because the audience applauds him wildly and demands an encore—thus, in the context of the film, Raúl is supposed to be a good singer. But, objectively, he's really not. [Emilio García Riera says María is like “María Callas” compared to Raúl.] To rub it in, the great Pedro Vargas performs one song, demonstrating how a talented professional should sound.

On the other hand, the acting in the film is generally quite good (or at least serviceable). Agustín de Anda, the heir apparent (at least in the acting realm—after his tragic death a few years later, his younger brother Rodolfo de Anda assumed this position) to Raúl de Anda, is satisfactory within a narrow range. The “horror” makeup for his face is only seen twice, briefly, and is fine. For much of the second half of the movie de Anda wears dark glasses and a bandanna over most of his face, which deprives him of some of the tools of a film actor, but he copes with this and convincingly portrays a man who is alternately bitter, desperate, and protective of his “blind” wife.

María Rivas is quite attractive (at times she resembles Ingrid Bergman and/or her daughter, Isabella Rossellini) and turns in a sympathetic performance. Oddly enough, for most of the movie she speaks without any discernable Spanish accent (this was her first Mexican movie), but in several scenes it mysteriously pops up for some reason. Víctor Parra had some brief stabs at leading-man roles, but was primarily used as a villain (he later took an administrative job at the Estudios América, which was partially financed by Raúl de Anda). Parra isn't really the primary menace in *La máscara de carne*: the film deals more with Raúl and María's interpersonal relationship and their attempts to cope with the aftermath of the auto accident, and Javier is merely a sort of evil *deus ex machina* who pops up from time to time to cause trouble. José Torvay has a larger role than usual as the kindly don Matías, and Armando Arriola does a good job as the also-kindly don Gabriel: both of these actors avoid some of their usual *shtick* (Torvay often played Middle Eastern immigrants, and Arriola was frequently cast as ditsy old men) and play their roles more or less straight.



La máscara de carne, thanks to Raúl de Anda's pioneering use of Eastmancolor in Mexican cinema, looks quite good. [Trivia note: there is a poster for *La gaviota*, de Anda's first Eastmancolor film, on the wall of don Pepe's office in the “El Infierno” cabaret.] Everything from Víctor Parra's red fedora to the auburn hair of María Rivas has a rich glow. A judicious mix of studio sets and actual location footage gives the picture a slick, substantial production gloss. Nothing looks exactly realistic—the various sleazy cabarets and apartments are too clean and

well-lit—but this is a romantic melodrama/crime film, not a serious study of urban, working-class life.



El cafre [The Brute] (Gazcón Films-Cin. Pelimex,



1983)* *Prod-Dir:* Gilberto Gazcón;
Scr: Fernando Galiana; *Adapt-Story:* Jorge Patiño, Gilberto Gazcón;
Orig. Novel: Manuel Cubillas Bravo;
Photo: Polo Villaseñor; *Music:* Gregorio García Segura; *Co-Prod Coord:* Francisco Medina; *Prod Mgr:* Luis Guevara; *Asst Dir:* Damián Acosta;
Film Ed: Sergio Soto; *Camera Op:*

Alberto Arrellanos; *Makeup:* Antonio Castañeda; *Sound Op:* Abel Flores; *Re-rec:* Ricardo Saldívar; *Sound Ed:* Ignacio Soto; *Union:* STIC

*Mexican-Spanish co-production

Cast: Joaquín Cordero (*Pedro Rojas*), Blanca Guerra (*Adriana Rojas*), Sergio Goyri (*Francisco Rojas*), Ramiro Oliveros (*Carlos Cuenca*), Concha Márques [sic] Piquer (*Eva Rojas*), Eduardo [aka Edgardo] Gazcón (*Alberto Rojas*), Valentín Trujillo (*Juanito Landa*), Andrés García (*trucker "Naranja mecánica"*), Julio Alemán (*trucker*), Rebeca Silva (*Dominga, waitress*), Hilda Aguirre (*Carmelita, hotel clerk*), Felipe Arriaga & Armando Silvestre (*highway patrolmen who are killed*), Miguel Manzano (*don Matías*), Mario Cid (*Daniel*), Jorge Patiño (*Mofles*), Pedro Weber "Chatanooga" (*Lopitas, customs agent*), Humberto Elizondo (*customs agent*), Bruno Rey (*Lencho*), Carlos León (*Sr. Vélez*), Socorro Bonilla, José Antonio Marroz (*Sr. Morán*), Rigoberto Carmona (*policeman at wreck*), Damián Acosta, Mauro Gazcón (*gas station boy*), Luis Guevara (*motel employee*), Bernabe Meléndrez (*man at first wreck*)

Notes: *El cafre* is a very good action-thriller/drama with an excellent starring performance by Joaquín Cordero. The film isn't perfect, but the good aspects far outweigh the flaws.

Pedro Rojas is a long-haul truck driver in a financial bind: he needs a large sum of money or will lose his house in Mexico City. He's offered the money he needs, and more, to drive a load from Tijuana to the capital—he refuses at first, thinking the cargo must be drugs or other contraband. Pedro is informed that it is a certain substance, banned for import to Mexico, needed for scientific research. The substance must be kept below 20 degrees Centigrade or it will explode, so a refrigeration device is installed in his truck, and scientist Cuenca will ride along to monitor the system.

As Pedro and Cuenca head for Mexico City, Pedro thinks about his family there. His wife Eva has emotional problems; his daughter Adriana is having an affair with her wealthy, older boss; his oldest son Francisco has no ambition and spends his time smoking dope and drinking rather than studying; his younger son Alberto is a serious student. Pedro learns Adriana has left home—Eva is upset, and Alberto has vowed to shoot Adriana's lover if he finds him. These issues make Pedro even more anxious to reach his destination in a timely fashion.

However, the long drive to the capital is fraught with difficulties. Venal customs officers and highway patrolmen must be paid off, the truck overheats, and the refrigeration system springs a leak, forcing Pedro and Cuenca to make temporary repairs and stop frequently to purchase bags of ice to keep the temperature down. As the material nears its explosive point, the truck is stopped once more by the police. In desperation, Cuenca shoots the two patrolmen to death but is mortally wounded himself.



Pedro learns he must reach Mexico City by 9pm in order to prevent his son Alberto from killing Adriana's boyfriend, so he speeds down the highway—the temperature in his truck rising steadily—ignoring the pursuing police and crashing through roadblocks. But he doesn't arrive in time (it's unclear if the images of Alberto shooting Adriana and her boss are his imagination or if this actually happens), and his truck finally smashes into a Pemex gas tanker and explodes in a huge fireball.

El cafre is rather reminiscent of *The Wages of Fear* (truck with dangerous cargo has to undertake a difficult



journey), as well as Gilberto Gazcón's earlier *Rage* (another "journey" film, as a doctor races the clock to get treatment before he develops rabies). There is considerable suspense and the tragic *denouement* is nicely unpredictable (sorry if I've spoiled it for you, above).

Pedro's personal problems are worked into the narrative in an effective manner, using flashbacks as well as "real-time" events (phone calls to his family in the capital, as well as at least one painful exchange on the road with a waitress in a café, seduced and abandoned by Pedro on a previous trip).

The film falters a bit with the inclusion of an extraneous sequence or two, probably included to increase the "action" quotient of the movie as well as to allow for cameos by some prominent guest stars. The first of these occurs early in the movie, when drunken trucker Daniel recklessly passes Pedro, then causes the rig driven by Juanito (Valentín Trujillo) to crash, with fatal results for

the young man. Later, two murderous drug smugglers in a pickup are caught in a rolling “sandwich” between trucks driven by Julio Alemán and Andrés García. Pedro is not involved in this action at all, except as a spectator (his truck is driving on a parallel highway, and he hears the men conversing via CB radio), so this sequence—while fairly well done—is completely irrelevant to the narrative as a whole. The other cameos are well-integrated into the plot (in Mexican cinema, sometimes it’s difficult to differentiate between a cameo, guest appearance, and a small part a performer took simply because he/she needed the work).

Although *El cafre* is mostly “about” the dangerous trip and Pedro’s personal problems, it also contains a significant amount of socio-political commentary, overt and covert. The constant need to bribe police and customs agents is one example, although this is such a fact of life that many Mexicans might not even notice it. There are also passing references to the financial crisis, inflation, corrupt politicians (“every new administration creates millionaires”), and so on. Discussing the need to smuggle the banned material into Mexico, Cuenca complains that the country’s progress is being hampered by such restrictions (he says the substance, similar to rocket fuel—although in “gelatine” form here—might be the basis of a revolutionary new energy source). In one flashback, Pedro has a long argument with his son Francisco about the latter’s failure to graduate from university after six years; Francisco spouts platitudes about the need for a “radical change” in the nation, and how his father should express solidarity with the working class. “I am working class,” Pedro responds, pointing out that his son has never earned a peso. Conversely, Adriana says her father can’t understand her desire to improve her lot in life because he’s just a truck driver, whereas she works in a big company with important people.



but his job caused him to be absent emotionally, and his

wife and children suffered as a result. Additionally, the scene in the café indicates Pedro was not above sleeping with women he met “on the road.” Cordero is quite sympathetic and very convincing in his role, which is much earthier and realistic than a number of parts he took in the 70s and beyond.

Pelimex was apparently a corporation that distributed Mexican cinema in Spain, and occasionally invested some of their profits in co-productions. *Santo vs. el Dr. Muerte* (1973) was produced by Pelimex and, perhaps coincidentally, the main theme music for that film was revised and re-used a decade later for *El cafre*. The only obvious Spanish link in *El cafre* is the presence of Ramiro Oliveros and his real-life wife Concha Márquez Piquer as Carlos Cuenca and Eva Rojas. Both are fine, although Oliveros at least seems to have been post-dubbed to remove his Spanish accent. The rest of the cast is solid, with Blanca Guerra, Sergio Goyri, and Rebeca Silva each getting one juicy “acting!” scene.

Technically *El cafre* is adequately done, although Gilberto Gazcón goes a bit overboard in a few sequences with quick-cuts and giant close-ups in an attempt to ramp up the tension, suspense, and drama. There aren’t any spectacular stunts for budgetary reasons, but the aforementioned sequence in which two tractor-trailers trap a pickup truck between them is efficiently executed, with helicopter shots providing an aerial viewpoint (however, the sequence goes on a bit too long and includes some awkward inserts of Andrés García and Julio Alemán in their trucks). The final explosion is cobbled together from about 10 different stock footage sources, but it is reasonably satisfying.



El cafre is well-made combination of drama and action, consistently paced, effectively written and featuring an excellent performance by Joaquín Cordero.



Aventuras de Pinocho y Cucuruchito

[Adventures of Pinocho and Cucuruchito]

(CIMESA, 1942) *Prod:* Gonzalo Elvira, Miguel Mezquíz; *Dir-Adapt:* Carlos Véjar Jr.; *Story:* Magda Donato [and Salvador Bartolozzi]; *Photo:* Ross Fisher; *Music Arr:* J. Gabilondo Soler “Cri-Cri”; *Music Dir:* Juan García

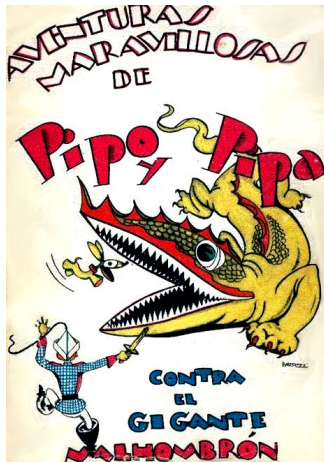
Esquivel; *General Supv*: Miguel Morayta; *Prod Mgr*: Paul Castelain; *Asst Dir*: Roberto Gabaldón [sic]; *Script Clerk*: A. Corona Blake; *Film Ed*: Juan José Marino; *Art Dir*: Carlos Toussaint, Vicente Petit; *Camera Op*: J. Jesús Hernández; *Makeup*: Fraustita [Dolores Camarillo]; *Sound*: R. Ruiz Esparza, H. Randall; Cinecolor

Cast: Francisco Jambrina (*Pinocho*), Alicia Rodríguez (*Pipa*), Martha Ofelia Galindo (*Cucuruchito*), J[osé] Elías Moreno (*Patapufo*, *pirate captain*), Maruja Grifell (*Pirulí*, *witch*), Enrique García Álvarez (*Duke Pandolfo*), Lucile Bowling (*Caracolillo*), Daniel Pastor (*Birlibirlín*), Carlos Amador (*King Betún*), Alfredo Corcuera (*General Tatú*), Celina (*dancer*), Pedro Elviro "Pitouto," Hernán Vera (*Patapón*, *pirate*), Raúl Guerrero, Amparo Villegas, Paco Astol



Notes: Salvador Bartolozzi was a Spanish cartoonist (of Italian descent, hence his last name) whose revised version of Carlo Collodi's "Pinocchio"--called "Pinocho"--became extremely popular in the mid-1920s. He later created the "Pipo y Pipa" stories, and translated much of his print work to children's theatre in pre-Civil War Spain. He was assisted in the latter by Magda Donato, a young woman he'd met in 1914; Donato became a successful actress in her own right, but continued to work with Bartolozzi, with whom she had a personal as well as professional relationship.

After the Civil War, Bartolozzi and Donato fled to France, but the German invasion forced them to seek refuge in Mexico in 1941. They resumed their careers as cartoonist and actress, and collaborated anew on theatrical



presentations and one feature film, *Aventuras de Pinocho y Cucuruchito*.

The film combines characters from Bartolozzi's different "universes"--the hero is Pinocho (whose chief resemblance to the Collodi character--and the Disney incarnation--is a long, pointed nose), but his sidekick is Pipa, a spunky dog who had formerly been teamed with Pipo. The witch Pirulí also

comes from the "Pipo y Pipa" series.

The story of *Aventuras de Pinocho y Cucuruchito* appears to be a similar amalgam of disparate elements, although the basic premise (a witch kidnaps a young

noblewoman and the hero and dog Pipa rescue her) seems to have been the same as *Pipo y Pipa en busca de Cocolín* (1936), a 1-reel puppet animation short made in Spain by director Adolfo Aznar. This film, which was banned after Franco assumed power in Spain, is apparently lost.

Aventuras de Pinocho y Cucuruchito is, for the most part, a filmed version of a children's play, with deliberately stylised, artificial sets, broad acting, outrageous costumes and makeup, and songs (courtesy of well-known composer of music for children Cri-Cri). There are almost no scenes which utilise filmed special effects (Pirulí flying on her broom and the dragon vanishing are about it, and these are quite rudimentary): otherwise, everything--including a large whale and dragon, wooden "waves" in the sea, etc.--resembles a stage effect. This is not necessarily a criticism (the "life-size" dragon is slow and clumsy but reasonably impressive), but rather a stylistic choice on the part of the filmmakers. *Aventuras de Pinocho y Cucuruchito* was perhaps the first Mexican film made specifically for an audience of young children (certainly the first fantasy film in this category), and a more "realistic" approach might not have been considered necessary or appropriate.

Apparently popular both in Mexico and Spain, *Aventuras de Pinocho y Cucuruchito* unfortunately is only currently available in an oddly truncated, blurry, black and white print (recently screened on Cine Nostalgia). According to Rogelio Agrasánchez Jr., the negative exists in a private collection and chances of a restoration and release are not good.

In the "Grand Duchy of Perlandia," the young Duchess Cucuruchito lives with her father, Duke Pandolfo de Tarantantán. Cucuruchito is abducted by evil witch Pirulí and her goblin aide Birlibirlín and taken to Africa. Heroic Pinocho and his faithful dog Pipa set out to rescue the girl, because that's what heroes do. They take passage on the ship captained by Patapufo, unaware the pirate and his scurvy crew have been suborned by Pirulí. The pirates sink their own ship in an attempt to kill Pinocho [this sequence is missing from the TV print], but the hero and his dog swim into the mouth of a whale, which conveys them safely to shore.



On land, Pinocho and Pipa are captured by cannibals ruled by King Betún. The heroic duo narrowly escapes being eaten for dinner when General Tatú reports the failure of his army to destroy a dragon that has been terrorising the countryside. Pinocho and Pipa slay the dragon (thanks to Pipa's distractions, Pinocho is able to stab the monster in the side, precipitating a gush of dragon blood); the monster vanishes, leaving behind a bewildered Cucuruchito. Pinocho and Pipa return Cucuruchito to her grateful father. It is reported that Pirulí died of rage or something (off-screen) when she learned her plans had been foiled.

Aventuras de Pinocho y Cucuruchito is difficult to evaluate for several reasons, mentioned above: it's aimed at children, and existing copies are of very poor quality. But even taking these things into consideration, a few critical comments might be made. On the negative side, the basic plot is adequate but there are several scenes which feel very extraneous (notably a bizarre sequence where the woman in the moon sings to a bunch of fish--all represented by Georges Melies-like props and costumes). The absence of a confrontation between Pinocho and Pirulí at the conclusion violates standard dramatic structure (in fact, existing prints come to a rather abrupt ending). The African sequence is quite politically incorrect, with extreme blackface caricatures of King Betún and his subjects (to be fair, these are so exaggerated that the characters seem like live-action cartoons and don't even resemble human beings, much).



not really resemble the (more or less) "realistic" dog Pipa of the comics, but she is quite cute in her costume and performs even more cutely. Rodríguez would go on to have a substantial acting character and for many years was

billed as Alicia "La Pipa" Rodríguez. Martha Ofelia Galindo vanishes from the picture after the first section, but she does a good job with the footage she's assigned (the relatively minor role played by "Cucuruchito" makes the film's title somewhat inappropriate, since it's Pinocho and Pipa who have most of the adventures).

The production design is interesting: as noted above, some of the characters look like living cartoons, while others are reasonably realistic. The primary costumes and sets are effective although some of the minor characters and their costumes have the appearance of having been thrown together without much thought or care.

In its current state, *Aventuras de Pinocho y Cucuruchito* is mostly a historical curiosity; a nicely-restored, colour version might be another matter entirely.



El cocinero de mi mujer [My Wife's Cook]

(Rosas Films, 1946) *Dir-*
Adapt: Ramón Peón; *Photo:*
Jesús Hernández Gil;
Music: Rosalío Ramírez;
Songs: [José] Balcells
Planas; *Prod Mgr:* Juan
Mari; *Prod Chief:* Antonio
Guerrero Tello; *Asst Dir:*
Matilde Landeta; *Film Ed:*
Alfredo Rosas; *Art Dir:*
Carlos Toussaint; *Camera*
Op: Manuel Santaella;
Makeup: Carmen



Palomino; *Sound:* B.J. Kroger; *Dialog Rec:* Rafael
Fernández; *Music Rec:* Enrique Rodríguez; *Asst Ed:*
Eufemio Rivera; *Choreog:* Julien de Meriche; *Animated*
Titles: Saviur y Eddy (Cine-Servicio); *Effects:* Hermanos
Machado

Cast: Ángel Garasa (*Enrique Corona*), Alicia Ravel
(*Mary*; *Estela*), Jorge Reyes (*Roberto Reyes*), Eugenia
Galindo (*Aunt Celeste*), [Pedro Elviro] Pitouto (*secretary*),
Juan Pulido (*Domínguez*, *stage mgr*), Fernando Flaquer,
Felipe de Flores (*employment agency worker*), Julien de
Meriche (*choreographer*), "Meriche Girls" (*chorus girls*),
[Irma] Bonola (*dancer*), Héctor Mateos (*employment*
agency clerk), Ricardo Luna (*dancer*)

Notes: Ángel Garasa left Spain as a result of the Spanish Civil War, and had a long and fruitful career in Mexico (in later years, he did return to his native land to make the occasional film appearance). Often cast in comedic supporting roles--including 10 films alongside Cantinflas--Garasa was elevated to the lead in a handful of 1940s pictures, among them *El cocinero de mi mujer*. Garasa had a distinctive personal style, but his starring vehicles were not especially notable and it is relatively easy to imagine another performer in his stead (in fact Garasa was the second choice for the lead in *El colmillo de Buda*, after Luis Sandrini became unavailable).

El cocinero de mi mujer is mildly enjoyable chiefly because of Garasa: otherwise, it's a slim farce with a somewhat unappealing female lead and too many

On the positive side, some of the characters are quite amusing (although others are not). Francisco Jambrina is completely unrecognisable as Pinocho; he's convincingly young and noble, and a reasonable facsimile of Bartolozzi's creation. Alicia Rodríguez, on the other hand, does

extraneous musical numbers. The comedy, such as it is, is derived almost entirely from Garasa's facial expression, gestures, and sardonic dialogue delivery--there aren't many jokes and almost no physical humour.

Impresario Roberto Reyes and his wife, musical star Mary, are at odds because he can't hire a cook. Wealthy Enrique crashes his car near the Reyes house and is mistakenly believed to be the new chef: he agrees because Mary is quite attractive and tells him she was considering suicide due to the strained household situation. Enrique is overly familiar for a servant, and clumsy



in the kitchen, but he provides excellent meals (secretly purchased from nearby restaurants). He postpones his departure when Mary's twin sister Estela arrives from New York. The "cook" and the young woman are attracted to each other. When a well-known performer falls ill on the opening night of Mary's new show, Roberto presses Enrique into service (Roberto and Mary had previously watched Enrique play and sing the guest star's particular song). Afterwards, Enrique vanishes. Estela reports to the office of the Corona company, for whom she is the New York sales representative, and discovers Enrique is her boss. Enrique hires 3 new cooks for Roberto and Mary, and as the film concludes, Enrique and Mary embrace.

El cocinero de mi mujer touches on a number of comic motifs, then drops them and moves on to the next. Enrique is a distracted, womanising rich man; he's a clumsy cook; he's a supercilious meddler; there is a brief "mistaken identity" sequence when Estela arrives and Enrique doesn't realise she's his employer's twin sister; Enrique and Mary have some mild romantic byplay; Enrique is dropped into a musical production number with no preparation, etc.



Garasa makes most of these bits slightly amusing, but it's all too weak and superficial.

The musical numbers, all written by Spanish composer José Balcells Planas,

are routine and Alicia Ravel is not particularly talented as a singer or dancer. The production number featuring Garasa in white tie-and-tails (and a top hat) is tolerable but proves the actor's strengths were not as a song-and-dance man.

Aside from Garasa, the performances are only adequate. As "Mary," Alicia Ravel is cranky and

annoying--"Estela" is a more sympathetic character and (to be fair) Ravel is better in this role. Jorge Reyes is subdued, and his character is also rather unpleasant, while Eugenia Galindo is satisfactory as Roberto's talkative aunt.

The production values are adequate. Most of the film takes place on a large mansion set, although there are a couple of outdoor location shots early in the picture. Curiously, after Enrique's musical number, there are a few obvious stock shots of audiences applauding--these don't match the new footage and in fact don't even match each other!

One nice touch are the animated titles by Saviur & Eddy of "Cine-Servicio." This company provided limited animation and amusing caricatures for a number of Mexican feature films in this era, including *La vida íntima de Marco Antonio y Cleopatra*, among others.

El cocinero de mi mujer isn't a poor film, but it is bland and doesn't utilise Ángel Garasa's comic talents to their fullest.



Pistoleros del oeste [Gunmen of the West] (Cin.

ABSA, 1964) *Prod:*

Abel Salazar; *Dir:*

René Cardona [Sr.];

Scr: Alfredo

Salazar; *Photo:*

Enrique Wallace;

Music: Antonio

Díaz Conde; *Music*

Dir/Arr: Rubén

Fuentes; *Prod Mgr:*

Alfredo Salazar;

Prod Chief: José

Alcalde G. *Asst Dir:*

Valerio Olivo; *Film*

Ed: Alfredo Rosas

Priego; *Decor:*

Pablo Galván;

Makeup: Felisa L.

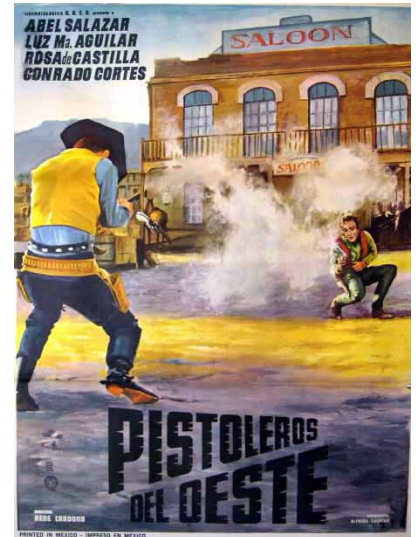
de Guevara; *Sound Supv:* James L. Fields; *Dialog Rec:*

Eduardo Arjona; *Re-rec:* Galdino Samperio; *Sound Ed:*

Abraham Cruz; *Union:* STPC

Cast: Abel Salazar (*Luis Godínez y Godínez*), Rosa de Castilla (*Paz Gómez*), Luz María Aguilar (*Clara Gómez*), Conrado Cortés (*Antonio Flores y Claveles del Campo*), Emilio Brillas (*Samuel Paz*), Enrique Lucero (*Sonrisas*), Mario Alberto Rodríguez (*Flaco*), Enrique Rocha (*Calvo*), N. León Moreno (*Pocaluz*), Evangelina Elizondo (*Margot*), Eleazar García "Chelelo" (*Florentino Garza*), Héctor Suárez (*Domingo del Ramos*), Luis Aragón (*comisario*), Emilio Garibay (*deputy*), Armando Gutiérrez (*bartender*), Antonio Raxel (*Luis "Pancho" Gómez*), Sergio Ramos (*Secre*), Pascual García Peña (*Domingo's father*), René Barrera (*saloon tough*)

Notes: A very, very mildly entertaining Western comedy, the most interesting thing about *Pistoleros del oeste* is mystery of why only nine actors were billed--and these 9 did not include Evangelina Elizondo, Eleazar



García "Chelelo," Héctor Suárez, or Antonio Raxel (the cast listed above is in credits order, and no one after Nothanael León is credited on-screen). Elizondo was still a "name" performer (even if she appears in only two scenes), Chelelo is the main villain, and Héctor Suárez has a major role, so their absence from the credits is puzzling to say the least. Also, the film's poster is completely action-oriented, giving no hint of the essentially comic nature of the movie.

The production values are adequate, with substantial sets and a lot of actual exterior shooting, and the plentiful



action sequences are reasonably well-staged. René Cardona wasn't an especially stylish director, but he was more than competent and *Pistoleros del oeste* is slick and well-paced. However, this can't hide the thread-bare and predictable nature of the

script, and the expected but still tedious plethora of musical numbers (Chelelo's comic song is the best of them all). Furthermore, there are actually few if any "jokes" in the movie: most of the attempts at humour come from the names, personalities, and actions of the characters, and these are generally not very funny. Abel Salazar is good enough, and Chelelo is his usual amusing self, but not much else works, comedically. Furthermore, after being a generally harmless romp for the entire running time, the film concludes with a gun battle in which Chelelo and his 5 comic henchmen are all shot to death, on-screen!

As the film opens, Luis fakes his own death in an



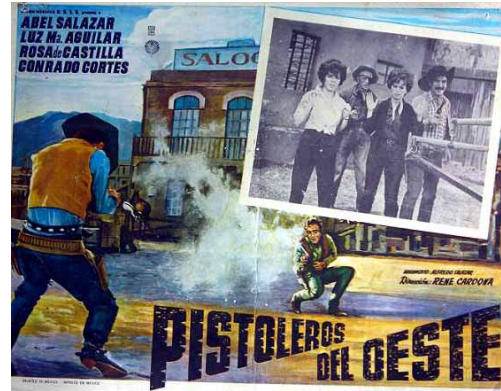
attempt to elude outlaws Pocaluz ("Little Light," who has one eye), Calvo ("Baldy," long-haired and bearded), Flaco ("Skinny," a fat guy), and Sonrisas ("Smiley," who's glum-looking) whom he had earlier

cheated of their share of some loot. All 5 men are thrown into a jail cell with Antonio, and after a few days the local *comisario* is so sick of their squabbling that he orders them to leave town. Some time later, Antonio and Luis meet again, to their mutual distaste. However, milquetoast Domingo de Ramos ("Palm Sunday") offers them a job: he wants them to temporarily abduct Clara Gómez, his fiancée. Domingo wishes to marry singer Lupe Vargas, and thinks Clara will be "disgraced" if she's kidnaped and spends several nights alone with two outlaws.

Luis and Antonio abduct "Clara" from her family's ranch, only to discover they've mistakenly taken her visiting cousin Paz instead. Luis tells Paz he's notorious kidnaper Florentino. When Domingo informs them of

their mistake, Luis and Antonio release Paz and take the real Clara prisoner. Almost immediately, however, Florentino and his gang--which now includes the 4 outlaws from the opening sequence--re-kidnap Paz, again confusing her with Clara.

Luis rescues Paz--whom he now loves--from Florentino. Clara and Antonio also fall in love. They have a showdown with Florentino and his men which--as mentioned above--results in the death of the seemingly-harmless criminals. Domingo is free to marry Lupe, who is soon going to have his child.



Pistoleros del oeste does not seem to have been modeled on any earlier film (unlike many of the scripts written by

Alfredo Salazar), but it can hardly be called "original." Most of the relationships in the picture are antagonistic: the 4 outlaws hate Luis, Luis and Antonio bicker constantly, Luis flirts with Paz but she rejects him, Clara physically abuses and emotionally berates Antonio, etc. (although the latter two pairs eventually form romantic couples, as all such couples in the movies do).

As noted above, Abel Salazar is satisfactory in his role, playing it with a sly sense of humour, part of his trademark style. Conrado Cortés, chiefly a singer, somewhat resembles Raúl Ramírez and isn't bad but a stronger second lead would have helped. The two leading ladies are adequate, although Luz María Aguilar's *macho* act is more annoying than funny. The best performance comes from Eleazar García "Chelelo"--it's his usual *shlick* but it's funny as always, and for once he isn't a second banana. As Florentino, he periodically makes "philosophical statements," which his "Secre" (short for "Secretary") writes down in a little notebook. After Florentino and his men are killed, Clara's father recovers the book and reads one of the outlaw's quips, which concludes the movie.

Not truly bad, but--aside from the performances of Salazar and Chelelo--closer to mediocre than good.



Mente asesina [Killer Mind] (Prods. Latinas Americanas, 1987) *Prod:* Orlando R. Mendoza; *Assoc Prod:* Carlos Mendoza Maldonado; *Dir-Readapt:* Alberto Mariscal; *Adapt:* Antonio Orellana; *Story:* Crox Alvarado; *Photo:* Antonio



Ruiz, Manuel Tejada; *Co-Dir*: Damián Acosta; *Asst Dir-Film Ed*: Javier García; *Video*: Porfirio Patiño, Ricardo García; *Audio*: Abel Flores; *Spec FX*: Arturo Godínez y Hnos.; *Re-rec*: Ariel Tellez; *Makeup*: Mayra Acosta

Cast: Hugo Stiglitz (*Dr. Ricardo González*), Silvia Manríquez (*Cristina de González*), Arlette Pacheco (*Lucy de la Peña*), Héctor Saez

(*Gustavo de la Torre*), Elsa Montes (*Delia*), Alfonso Munguía (*Rubén Castro*), Antonio Zubiaga (*Timoteo*), Carlos Rotzinger (*Dr. Guillermo de la Peña*), Benjamín Islas (*doctor*), Laura Tovar (*secretary*), Lucy Cantú (*nurse Nora*), Ramiro Orci (*police agent*),



José L. Fernández (*cemetery watchman*), Carlos Canto (*dentist*), Juan Moro (*Federico*), Juan Luna (*apartment porter*)

Notes: this has to be one of the ugliest films ever made, visually. Shot on videotape, *Mente asesina* looks horrible, the harsh lighting and unpleasant giant closeups cooperating to present a thoroughly bad series of images to the viewer. I suppose I may be a bit prejudiced--many years ago (probably shortly after the videotape was

released), I rented *Mente asesina* and was thoroughly disillusioned, not only by the inferior production values (the canned music score is also awful), but also by the poor script and because I'd expected a horror movie.



Ricardo is a skilled brain surgeon on the verge of a nervous breakdown. When lawyer Rubén informs him that he's representing Ricardo's wife Cristina in her divorce case, Ricardo angrily orders him out of his office. That night, Ricardo runs down Rubén with his car, killing him. [There is a suggestion Ricardo intended to kill Gustavo, his wife's new suitor, whose car Rubén had borrowed.] Ricardo later opens Rubén's grave, cuts off his head, boils it down to a skull, and sends it as a present to Dr. de la Peña, the father of Cristina and her sister Lucy (who had been Rubén's fiancée).

Ricardo then abducts his mistress Delia and her lover Federico, leaving them tied up and at the mercy of ravenous rats in a secret location. He also



murders his nurse Nora, who knew of his relationship with Delia and threatened to go to the police.

Timoteo, Dr. de la Peña's mute servant, shows Lucy a distinctive gold tooth on the skull Ricardo sent them: a dentist confirms the skull belonged to Rubén. Ricardo confronts Gustavo, Lucy, Timoteo, and Cristina outside their house: he attempts to kidnap Cristina and kill Gustavo and Timoteo, but is shot to death by the police. "My husband had a killer mind," Cristina says. The End.

Other than the scant amusement supplied by Hugo Stiglitz's hammy performance, there is nothing to recommend *Mente asesina*.

Ironically, most of the other actors turn in perfectly reasonable performances, which is professionally admirable but not especially entertaining, whereas Stiglitz shouts angrily, laughs madly, rubs a pistol all over his face, and grimaces at the drop of a hat. Unfortunately, this is not enough to justify watching the film.

The sad thing about the movie is that most of the people involved were talented professionals with a number of decent films to the credit. Crox Alvarado had only a few screen credits as a writer, and had passed away in 1984, three years before *Mente asesina* was made, but this shouldn't excuse the fact that the film has a script which provides no surprises, no insight, no suspense, nothing.

Antonio Orellana had written a number of good scripts, and Alberto Mariscal was a highly competent director (although most of his critically-acclaimed



movies were Westerns, he did make pictures in many genres), but they were unable to overcome the bland script and the limitations of shooting on video. *Mente asesina* isn't boring, but it doesn't even qualify as "so bad it's good."



THE MEXICAN FILM BULLETIN is

published 6 times a year by David Wilt, 6803 Dartmouth Ave, College Park MD 20740 USA. Contents ©2013 by David E. Wilt, except for material already copyrighted, which is used under the Fair Use doctrine. Read *MFB* online:

www.terpconnect.umd.edu/~dwilt/mexnews.html

