

# THE MEXICAN FILM BULLETIN

## VOLUME 19 NUMBER 2

### MARCH-APRIL 2013

#### Obituaries

Sadly, each issue seems to bring more obituaries, as members of the Mexican film industry--or individuals who had some connection with Mexican cinema--pass away. But at least we can pay tribute to their work, which, fortunately, endures.

#### Carmen Montejo, 1925-2013

Actress Carmen Montejo --whose career in Mexican cinema spanned nearly 60 years and whose professional life as an actress was even longer--died on 25 February 2013. María Teresa Sánchez González was born in May



1925 in Cuba, and worked as a child actress in her native land before emigrating to Mexico with her mother and brother in the early 1940s. Montejo's new name was suggested by director Chano Urueta, who cast her in *No*

*matarás* (1943), her first major role (she had previously appeared in a small part in *Resurrección*).

Montejo worked steadily in cinema until the mid-1950s, often playing "sensitive" young women. From 1960 until 1985 she averaged more than a film a year, but was then off-screen until the early 2000s when she made a handful of final movie appearances. She was nominated 4 times for Arieles, in 1952 winning the Best Co-Starring Actress prize for *Mujeres sin mañana*. She received the IMCINE award for her career in 1995, and the Ariel de Oro in 2005.

In addition to her film work, Montejo worked steadily on the stage, on the radio, and in *telenovelas* and on other TV shows, including a co-starring role in "Tres generaciones," as the mother of Angélica María and grandmother of Sasha Sokol.

Carmen Montejo was married once, to businessman Manuel González Ortega, who was twice her age. The marriage produced a son, but González Ortega died when Montejo was only 25 years old and she never remarried.



#### Sara Montiel Dies

Sara Montiel, a popular actress who became a cult figure in her native Spain and elsewhere, died in Madrid on 8 April 2013; she was 85 years old. Montiel, whose real name was María Antonia Abad Fernández, was born

in March 1928 in Ciudad Real, Spain. After winning a studio-sponsored beauty contest, Montiel made her film debut in 1944. She achieved international fame after appearing in *Locura de amor* (1948) and relocated to Mexico in the early 1950s, making her debut in *Furia roja* (her role in the English-language version *Stronghold* was played by Veronica Lake).

Over the next 5 years she would appear in a number of Mexican movies. Curiously, after co-starring 3 times with Pedro Infante early in her Mexican career, Montiel's later Mexican work was mostly in undistinguished melodramas and comedies.

In addition to pictures made for Mexican producers, Montiel also appeared in Hollywood films shot in Mexico, such as *Serenade*, *Vera Cruz* and *Run of the Arrow*. In the latter film, her dialogue was post-dubbed by Angie Dickinson.

Returning to Spain in the latter half of the Fifties, Montiel made one of her biggest hits, *El último cuplé*, which established her as a major musical star and, later, a cult favourite. After 1974, Montiel appeared in only two more films: her last screen appearance came in 2011's *Abrázame*.

Sara Montiel was married 4 times: to director Anthony Mann, producer José Vicente Ramírez Olalla, businessman Pepe Tous, and Tony Hernández. While married to Tous, Montiel adopted a daughter and a son.



#### Arthur Hansl



Arthur Hansl, a globe-trotting American actor who had a number of prominent *gringo* roles in Mexican cinema, died of cancer on 6 March 2013 in Montecito, California. Hansl was born in New York City in 1931, and served in the Marine Corps as a young man. After spending a few years in Mexico, he traveled back to the USA, then to Spain, and finally to Rome.

In 1965, he married actress Mary Arden (*Blood and Black Lace*, *Kriminal*), who

encouraged him to become an actor. Hansl—usually billed as “Arthur Hansel”—worked in a number of European films before moving to Mexico in the late 1960s. Over the next half-decade, he appeared—usually playing *gringos*--in films such as *El sabor de la venganza*, *Futbol México 70*, *Vanessa*, *Trío y cuarteto*, *La mansión de la locura*, *Mary Mary Bloody Mary*, and *La amargura de mi raza*, returning to the USA in the mid-1970s. After a continuing role on “General Hospital” and small parts in a few Hollywood movies, Hansl retired from acting and turned to writing, producing a number of novels and his autobiography. He also remarried, to Nicole Richardeau.

Art Hansl’s autobiography was published in 2009. Information here: <http://www.rp-author.com/Hansl/>



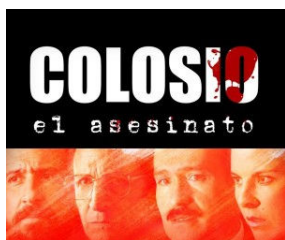
## Camilo Vives

Cuban producer Camilo Vives, long-time head of ICAIC, died on 11 March 2013; he was 71 years old. Vives took charge of ICAIC (the Cuban state film institute) in the 1970s, and in 2001 was named head of the Productora Internacional del ICAIC. In his latter role, he supervised numerous international co-productions, including a number of films in which Mexico was a production partner. These included *Lista de espera*, *Sabor latino* (with Blanca Guerra), *Derecho de asilo*, and perhaps the most famous film with which he was associated, *Fresas y chocolate*, directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío. He was also the president of the board of directors of FIPCA (the Federación Iberoamericana de Productores de Cine y Audiovisuales, which represents the film producing interests of 12 different countries).



## CANACINE Awards 2013

CANACINE (The Cámara Nacional de la Industria Cinematográfica y del Videograma) held its national convention in Puebla, and on 11 April presented its awards covering 2012 in Mexican cinema.



*Colosio: El asesinato* won Best Film and Box-Office Champion (Mexican film-*The Avengers* was the top-grossing film overall); Carlos Bolado was named Best Director for his work on this film, and Daniel Giménez Cacho received the Best Actor award (shared with Tenoch Huerta from

*Días de gracia*).

The Best Mexican Animated Film award was presented to *El Santos vs. la Tetona Mendoza*, and *Hecho en México* won Best Documentary.

CANACINE announced that 319 films were premiered in Mexico in 2012: 55 Mexican features, 146 U.S. productions, and 118 pictures from other countries.



## Other News

The Agrasánchez Film Archives (Rogelio Agrasánchez Jr.) now has a blog with lots of excellent photos and detailed information about Mexican cinema:

<http://filmotropo.wordpress.com/>

You should also check out their main website:

<http://www.mexfilmarchive.com/>

Also, the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, part of the University of Texas, Austin Libraries, has recently obtained 3,000 Mexican film lobby cards from long-time Mexican movie “paper” dealer Posterazzi. Posterazzi has uploaded images of many of lobby cards (both for Mexican movies and foreign films released in Mexico) to the Web. Start here:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/posterazzi>

More on the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection here:

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/benson/about.html>



## Carmen Montejo

**No matarás** [Thou Shalt Not Kill] (CLASA Films, 1943) *Prod:* Vicente Saisó Piquer; *Dir-Scr:* Chano Urueta; *Orig. Play:* Joaquín Margall; *Photo:* Raúl Martínez

*Solares;* *Music:* Jorge Pérez; *Prod Chief:* Jesús M. Centeno; *Asst Dir:* Zacarías Gómez Urquiza; *Film Ed:* Jorge Bustos; *Art Dir:* Jesús Bracho; *Costume Design:* Armando Valdés Peza; *Makeup:* Felisa L. de Guevara; *Sound:* Consuelo Rodríguez, Howard Randall

**Cast:** Sara García (*Aurora Montes*), Emilio Tuero (*Marcos Duclos*), Carmen Montejo (*Cristina*), Rafael Baledón (*Julio Paredes*), Rafael Banquels [sic] (*Ricardo Saavedra*), Katty [sic] Jurado (*Susana*), Paco Fuentes (*prosecutor*), Elva Munguía, José Pulido (*Gabriel*), Elva Álvarez & María Luisa Fernández (*students*), Edmundo Espino (*Juan Vargas*), Rosario García, Jorge Arriaga (*Benítez, gambler*), Francisco Pando (*notary*)



**Notes:** *No matarás* is an incredibly talky, awkward melodrama only partially redeemed by a typically-outrageous Chano Urueta dream sequence and some spectacular scenery-chewing.

History teacher Marcos is on trial for the murder of Julio Paredes. The prosecutor furiously demands the death penalty, only to have his case derailed when defense attorney Ricardo proves Marcos had not fired his pistol—

the alleged murder weapon—at all. Ricardo then reveals the true story (in flashback):

Several decades earlier, the widowed Aurora works numerous menial jobs to support her infant daughter Cristina, finally saving enough money for a down payment on a little neighbourhood store. Aurora borrows 500 pesos at ruinous interest from Juan Vargas, but the moneylender then alters the document to increase her debt three-fold. Stripped of her livelihood, Aurora protests and is sent to prison as a result. Cristina goes to an orphanage.



Time passes, and Aurora has been released from jail. She now runs a high-class gambling club, and the teen-aged Cristina (unaware of her mother's business) attends an upper-class girls' boarding school. One of the teachers is Marcos Duclos, upon whom Cristina has a crush.

However, she's convinced by her roommate Susana to go on a double-date with Julio Paredes, a handsome roué. Cristina falls in love with Julio and is seduced by him in a back room of Aurora's club. Aurora discovers this and disowns her. Julio doesn't love Cristina, and when he later learns she and the wealthy Marcos are



mutually attracted, he engineers a reconciliation between Aurora and Cristina as well as a marriage between Cristina and Marcos (passing himself off as Cristina's "cousin"), then goes off to live a high life as a gambler on money leeched from Cristina. Oh, and Cristina is pregnant with Julio's child.

However, Julio's money runs out and he returns to Mexico for more, threatening to tell Marcos everything



otherwise. To forestall this, Cristina admits the truth to her husband, including the fact that his daughter isn't his daughter. Marcos confronts Julio, pistol in hand, but has a dizzy spell and collapses as 4 shots ring out. Who killed Julio?

Aurora, of course. Ricardo brings her into court and she confesses to shooting the despoiler of her daughter. Marcos is freed to reconcile with Cristina and Aurora will probably be treated leniently by the court.

*No matarás* is a period film, but set in a rather indeterminate time: jury trials were mostly abolished in Mexico after 1929, so presumably the framing story of the trial takes place before that date. This would place the early scenes of Aurora and toddler Cristina in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the later sequences more or less contemporary

to the time of the trial (when Aurora is released from prison and establishes her gambling club, she uses a telephone, for instance), although the women's costumes seem older than that. Overall, the production values are very good, with substantial sets and a decent number of extras.

The structure of *No matarás* isn't especially radical, except that the opening trial sequence is extremely protracted. Paco Fuentes and Rafael Banquells pull out all the stops in their performances: Fuentes as the prosecutor appears especially angry, shouting his lines and bitterly castigating Marcos for killing Julio. The flashback scenes are also rife with flamboyant melodrama, although not in such prolonged fashion. Interestingly enough, the screen time allotted to the various performers is relatively balanced: the romance between Emilio Tuero and Carmen Montejo is downplayed, Sara García has a lot of scenes but isn't dominant (and is off-screen for a significant amount of time), Rafael Baledón is used effectively, and so forth.

Tuero also played a girls' school teacher who has a romance with one of his pupils in *Internado para señoritas* (1943), an odd coincidence. He's adequate here but—as noted above—he really has very little to do despite his billing. Sara García does a good job in a role which is rather different than her later “grandmother of Mexico” parts: she's first a middle-aged widow, and later becomes a gray-haired dowager-businesswoman. *No matarás* gave Carmen Montejo her first significant acting role and she's fine, even though the script tosses her some curves: at first she's determined not to break the rules and sneak out with Susana (although she promises never to betray her roommate's secret), then she rather quickly substitutes Julio for Marcos as the object of her affections, even saying “why don't you kiss me?” Of course, she has to be plied with champagne before giving up her virginity, and she later turns into the standard, long-suffering wife/mother, devoted to her husband and child.



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The most interesting sequence in *No matarás* is a strange dream sequence which occurs when Cristina falls asleep during a classmate's boring recitation of the life of Joan of Arc.

Cristina imagines herself as Joan, then fantasizes Marcos as a knight, dreams of herself overshadowed by a giant textbook, reviews a parade of handsome suitors with Susana, and then envisions herself being burned at the stake, before Marcos finally wakes her up. This sequence includes double exposure, split-screen, etc. Chano Urueta frequently

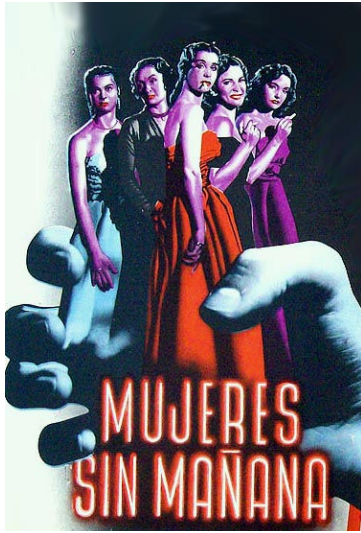


utilised optical effects and dream sequences in his films, although since *No matarás* is essentially a straight melodrama, the presence of these scenes is rather surprising. The film also concludes with Aurora saying, in voice-over, that she'll have to face judgement in Heaven for killing Julio, because she violated one of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not kill." This is heard over an image of mountains and the words "NO MATARÁS" appear in the sky!

Clumsily structured and paced, *No matarás* is not without interest but it's not one of the better melodramas of the era.



## Mujeres sin mañana [Women With No



Tomorrow] (Mier y Brooks, 1951) *Exec* Prod: Ernesto Enríquez; *Prod*: Felipe Mier, Óscar Brooks; *Dir*: Tito Davison; *Adapt*: Jesús Cárdenas, Tito Davison; *Dialog*: Julio Alejandro; *Story*: Jesús Cárdenas, Julio Alejandro, Tito Davison; *Photo*: Agustín Martínez Solares; *Music*: Carlos Tirado; *Prod Mgr*: Miguel Hernández Cajigal; *Prod Chief*: Enrique Morfin; *Asst*

*Dir*: Manuel Muñoz; *Film Ed*: Rafael Ceballos; *Art Dir*: Edward Fitzgerald; *Decor*: Carlos Grandjean; *Lighting*: Juan Durána; *Camera Op*: José A. Carrasco; *Makeup*: Concepción Zamora, Margarita Ortega; *Sound Supv*: James L. Fields; *Music/Re-rec*: Galdino Samperio; *Dialog Rec*: Nicolás de la Rosa

**Cast:** Leticia Palma (*Margot aka María Elena*), Manolo Fábregas (*Willy Stevens*), Carmen Montejo (*Marta*), Carlos Cores (*Antonio*), Andrea Palma (*Olga aka Ángela Ederly*), Andrés Soler (*don Ángel Serrano*), Conchita Carracedo (*Beatriz aka Nuria*), Rebeca Iturbide (*Beba*), Irma Dorantes (*Alicia*), Ramón Gay (*Eduardo*), Armando Sáenz (*Carlos*), Francisco Jambrina (*lawyer*), Wolf Rubinsky (*Juan*), Amada Dosamantes (*Eugenia*), Nicolás Rodríguez, Jorge Arriaga (*Justino*), Juan Pulido & Consuelo Monteagudo (*anniversary couple in club*), Olga Donoso (*Titina*), Los Chavales de España, Eva Garza (*singer*), Jesús Valero (*don Alfonso*), Julio Ahuet (*Domingo*), Victorio Blanco (*waiter*), José Muñoz (*bartender*), Víctor Alcocer (*customer in club*), Héctor Godoy (*Quique*), Stefan Verne (*customer who doesn't speak Spanish*), ?Berta Lehar (*club customer*)

**Notes:** *Mujeres sin mañana* is a very good film in many ways, but falls short of "classic" status for a number of reasons. It's still a glossy, well-made and interesting melodrama with an excellent cast and *mise-en-scene*.

The film opens with an off-screen narrator introducing a group of women who—as night falls—are beginning to awaken and prepare for their evening's work in the nightclub operated by Willy Stevens. The women include Margot, the level-headed leader; drug addict Marta; mature Olga; air-headed Beba; and Beatriz, who plans to leave her job the next day. Others who work in the club include young wife/mother Eugenia, and rotund comic relief Titina. Later, Margot rescues the naive Alicia from an importunate client: the young woman was impressed by the establishment's glamour, but didn't realise what her employment required.



Actually, the women seem to merely dance and drink with the various customers, and there is no *specific* suggestion that the club is a front for a brothel, although the women all seem ashamed of their work there. The nightclub itself is very large and luxurious, with impressive musical acts, and caters to a mixed clientele of naval officers (the setting is an unidentified port city) and well-dressed civilians.

Various sub-plots unfold over the course of the evening. Margot has to fend off the advances of Willy, and meets sailor Antonio (they fall in love quickly, and



decide to run off together); Beatriz is reunited with her former boyfriend, unshaven Eduardo, who's finally obtained employment; Eugenia's husband Juan discovers she works in the club and is badly beaten by Willy's thugs (Juan and Eugenia

reconcile); Olga is approached by a lawyer representing her ex-husband (it's implied she had an affair and left him and their young son), who offers to support her financially (she refuses, apparently viewing her current job as punishment for her previous sins); Marta is desperate for money for an "operation" that will cure her (what sort of operation cures drug addiction is never stated; Willy refuses to loan her the needed funds, but Beatriz—once she's reunited with Eduardo—gives Marta the ticket she'd purchased for her trip and says "cash it in and use the money for your treatment").

Willy controls the club, although it's owned by the alcoholic don Ángel, who just happens to be Antonio's long-lost father. Willy keeps the older man drunk and incoherent. When Antonio meets his father, he doesn't—as one might expect—greet don Ángel joyfully, instead demanding to know what he did with the money he stole

from Antonio's mother. Don Ángel refuses to acknowledge Antonio as his son.

The jealous Willy allows Antonio to win a large sum of money at baccarat, then has his henchmen rob and murder the sailor on the beach. The women unite to trap Willy, and Margot shoots the cowardly gangster to death. She's arrested, but will be given a minimal sentence.

The standard movie-melodrama outrageous coincidences and illogical actions are not any more egregious in *Mujeres sin mañana* than usual for the genre.



What harms the film the most is the stilted content of individual scenes. The picture is structured as an alternating series of sequences, one for each character, so that everyone (with the exception of Beba) gets one or more scenes of

exposition and ACTING! Unfortunately, these sections are filled with highly unnatural, *faux*-poetic/philosophical dialogue. Occasionally there is a good line or a sincere sentiment, but most of the lines miss their mark by miles, despite the best efforts of the actors to sell them.

And the acting in *Mujeres sin mañana* is actually rather good. Carmen Montejo won a Best Co-Starring Actress Ariel for her role: this was probably awarded mostly on the basis of a single scene, where she straight-forwardly



relates the sad story of her life to a table full of slumming middle-aged people who thought it would be "fun" to hear from a fallen woman. Otherwise, Montejo plays

her part semi-hysterically, which is flashier but somewhat less effective than the restrained performances of Leticia Palma, Andrea Palma (no relation), etc. Manolo Fábregas, despite his placid, even gormless demeanour, is menacingly evil—in one scene, he orders his thugs to keep beating and kicking Eugenia's husband Juan, even though the other man has one arm in a sling!

Rebeca Iturbide is sly and amusing as Beba, who pretends to be foolish and frivolous, but is actually a talented pickpocket who robs her clients and acts intelligently and wisely when needed. In one funny bit, she—seemingly unconsciously--wiggles her fingers in anticipation of plucking a wallet from a customer. Andrés Soler plays yet another in his seemingly endless string of "drunken reprobate" roles, but he's really pretty good at this type of character.

The supporting cast is loaded with familiar faces, including Wolf Rubinsky, Victorio Blanco, José Muñoz, Víctor Alcocer, Stefan Verne and Julio Ahuet. Verne plays a naval officer who doesn't speak Spanish (he sounds as if he's speaking Russian or another Slavic language), and eventually gets so drunk he doesn't notice when the slim and attractive Beba is replaced at his table by the much less slim and attractive Titina.

The production values of *Mujeres sin mañana* are excellent; the

film takes place almost entirely in the nightclub, on a variety of sets, which are dressed and lit expertly. Tito



Davidson's direction is slick and professional, without being particularly stylish. He applies the "zero-degree" method of filmmaking and never draws attention with radical camera movement or angles, without sacrificing a certain fluidity and glossy "look."

Although *Mujeres sin mañana* is certainly a woman-centered film, it's not necessarily a feminist work. The female protagonists are portrayed sympathetically, but



their lives are controlled and defined by men, including but not restricted to Willy and the male clientele of the club. Eugenia works to supplement her husband's salary (so they can buy a house in the country), Beatriz decides to depart with former boyfriend Eduardo, Olga punishes herself for betraying her husband and son. Even the assertive Margot, who apparently stays in her job mostly out of solidarity with her less fortunate co-workers, is finally motivated to leave Willy's employ after meeting Antonio. Antonio aside, most of the male characters are weak, lecherous, foolish, evil, or a combination of these.

*Mujeres sin mañana* is wonderful to look at, but not entirely successful as a fully-realised dramatic film.





## Sara Montiel

**Piel canela** [Cinnamon Skin] (Compañía Cinematográfica Mexicana, 1953) *Exec Prod*: Ramón Peón; *Dir-Scr-Adapt*: Juan J. Ortega; *Dialogue*: Julio Alejandro; *Story*: Mané Sierra; *Photo*: Manuel Gómez Urquiza; *Music*: Gonzalo Curiel; *Prod Mgr*: Antonio Morones A.; *Prod Chief*: Enrique Hernández Gil; *Asst Dir*: Mario Llorca; *Film Ed*: José W. Bustos; *Art Dir*: Ramón Rodríguez G.; *Cuban Photo*: Max Liszt; *Camera Op*: Leobardo Sánchez, Juan Puga; *Lighting*: Ramón Vázquez; *Sara Montiel's Dance Supv*: Ana Mérida; *Costumes*: Elizabeth; *Medical Technical Adv*: Dr.

Mario González Ulloa; *Sound Dir*: James L. Fields; *Dialog Rec*: Manuel Topete B.; *Music Rec*: Galdino Samperio; *SpFX*: Jorge Benavides; *Sound Ed*: Antonio Bustos; *Makeup*: Rosa Guerrero

**Cast**: Sara Montiel (*Marucha*), Manolo Fábregas (*Dr. Carlos Alonso*), Ramón Gay (*Julio Chávez*), Felipe de Alba (*Dr. Jorge Morales*), Rosa Elena Durgel (*Alicia*), Fernando Casanova (*Paco*), Magda Donato (*patient*), Salvador Quiroz (*Ernesto, nightclub mgr*), Pablo [Ismael] Larumbe (*Antonio Salas Porras*), Jorge Casanova, Arturo Corona, Manuel de la Vega, Ana Bertha Lepe (*carpa employee*), Victorio Blanco (*card dealer*), José Muñoz (*bartender*), Rafael A. Ortega, Chel López (*detective*), Ignacio Peón (*man in gambling club*), Rogelio Fernández (*henchman*)

**Notes**: Juan J. Ortega was one of the more prolific producer-directors in Mexican cinema from the early Forties until the mid-Sixties (the directors' union frowned upon this combination, believing penurious producers would direct their own movies to avoid hiring a "professional" director—René Cardona, Juan Orol, Ortega, and a handful of others were grandfathered-in when the rules were made in the mid-1940s). His projects were mostly melodramas, although towards the end of his directorial career he switched to Westerns, probably because they were more saleable. *Piel canela*, although set in Cuba, was mostly shot in Mexico; some sources indicate the original version had a colour sequence, but current prints are wholly in black-and-white.

Marucha is the partner of gangster Julio, who uses her as a driver during a robbery in which he shoots a man to death. She also sings in shabby *carpas* and nightclubs, wearing her hair in Veronica Lake-style to cover one side

of her face, which is horribly disfigured: as a child, she lived in extreme poverty and her face was chewed by rats! [When her face is shown, a large mass of scar tissue from temple to jawline is visible.] At one performance, Marucha is heckled by someone in the audience and collapses on stage. Plastic surgeon Dr. Carlos Alonso, attending the show, rushes backstage to help her. Marucha is suspicious and bitter, but agrees to visit his clinic, over Julio's objections (Julio himself has several large scars on his face, but these are minor compared to Marucha's condition).



The surgery is a success and Marucha is now beautiful. She rejects the advice of Carlos to live a decent life, instead returning to show business with the express intent of making money and getting revenge on people who'd previously mocked and avoided her. Carlos, who has fallen in love with his patient (to the sorrow of his faithful nurse Alicia, who loves him), begins drinking heavily. Alicia advises him to find Marucha and get her out of his system altogether.



Carlos and Marucha reconcile, and she eventually agrees to leave the sleazy world of cabarets. However, Julio reappears and blackmails Marucha into arranging for Carlos to operate on *him*. Afterwards, the news leaks out and Carlos is accused of assisting a wanted criminal; he blames Marucha. Marucha tracks down Julio (who doesn't look much different now, although his facial scars are gone) and betrays him to the police; Julio, mortally wounded in a gun battle with detectives, shoots Marucha in the face before he dies. Carlos operates on Marucha but is unable to save her life. As the film ends, Carlos and Alicia get back together.

The conclusion of *Piel canela* is rushed and confusing. Julio ironically shoots Marucha in the *face* (he had earlier threatened to mar her new beauty with a knife, but his shot just seems to have been a lucky one); but afterwards why is Carlos, a *plastic surgeon*, operating on a gunshot victim? In retrospect, since Marucha dies, perhaps a surgeon more skilled in such things would have been a better choice? This operation includes some gruesome stock footage,

which is certainly not pleasant to see and really unnecessary (there is none in the sequence of Marucha's



looks rather smug and triumphant now that her rival for his attentions is finally dead.

The Cuban setting of *Piel canela* is only marginally relevant. What came first, the desire to use the Bobby Capó song "Piel canela" as the theme or the idea of having the heroine be a dark-skinned Cuban? Sara Montiel is tinted several shades darker than her natural complexion, but makes no attempt at a Cuban accent (in fact, no one does). One of her musical numbers is Cuban-flavoured, but this means nothing, since plenty of films of the era set in Mexico have similar songs and dances. Ortega apparently liked working in Cuba (and Ramón Peón was born there) but there doesn't seem to have been any particularly compelling narrative reason for this film's setting. [Montiel and Ortega would return to Cuba in *Yo no creo en los hombres* and *Frente al pecado de ayer*.]

The performances are variable. Sara Montiel gets to diva it up, with lots of flaming melodramatics, but she's also rather good in scenes where she is more restrained (not really *restrained*, but *more* restrained than she is in other parts), winking, smiling, shuddering, staring wildly. She gets to sing 4 songs and also dances in two of these. Manolo Fábregas seems too light for the role, staring guilelessly at the screen: someone with more *gravitas* would have been better (no one did "hits the skids over romantic disillusionment" better than Ramón Armengod).



earlier operation—although some real-life "before and after" photos of plastic surgery patients can be seen in one sequence). After Marucha dies, Carlos goes to the hospital's chapel and is joined there by Alicia, who

Ramón Gay is fine, and his makeup in his pre-surgery scenes (which is most of his footage in the film) is restrained and really does make him look like an entirely different person. Even afterwards, he's not the slim,

moustachioed fellow we're familiar with, but he's at least recognisable. Rosa Elena Durgel looks dumpy and unattractive (which she wasn't in other films) and doesn't do much with her doormat role. Rosita Fornés and Pedro Vargas sing one song each: Vargas does "Piel canela."

Ortega doesn't go out of his way to add any stylistic touches, directing in a competent, let's-move-it-along manner. The production values are satisfactory. The

distinction between the location shooting in Cuba and the Mexican studio work is not obvious at all.

Emilio García Riera suggests this is an uncredited reworking of *A Woman's Face* (1941), a Joan Crawford vehicle (which was in turn a remake of *En kvinnas ansikte*, a 1938 Swedish film starring Ingrid Bergman). Although I've seen neither of the earlier movies (that I can recall), plot descriptions suggest the premise (scarred woman criminal cured by plastic surgeon, her former partner then returns) is similar but the plot and characters are not. *Piel canela* is also vaguely reminiscent of *Pygmalion/My Fair Lady*, although the romantic relationship between Henry Higgins and Eliza Doolittle is hardly as melodramatic as the one between Carlos and Marucha.

*Piel canela* is generally entertaining but stretches credulity (as melodramas are wont to do); the final sequences—after Carlos operates on Julio—are especially rushed and illogical, and the "tragic" ending seems a bit hollow.



**Se solicitan modelos** [Models Wanted] (Prods. Galindo Hermanos, 1954) *Prod*: Jesús Galindo; *Dir-Scr*: Chano Urueta; *Adapt*: Chano Urueta, Ramón Pérez P.; *Story*: Ernesto Cortázar, Eduardo Galindo; *Photo*: Ignacio Torres; *Music*: Gonzalo Curiel; *Prod Mgr*: Porfirio Triay Peniche; *Prod Chief*: Ricardo Beltri; *Asst Dir*: Américo Fernández; *Film Ed*: José W. Bustos; *Art Dir*: F. Marco Chilet; *Camera Op*: Andrés Torres, Teodoro García; *Lighting*: Cirilo Rodríguez; *Makeup*: Angelina Garibay; *Director of Models*: Pilar Candel; *Sound Supv*: James L.



Fields; *Dialog Rec*: Francisco Alcayde; *Re-rec*: Galdino Samperio; *Sound Ed*: Antonio Bustos

**Cast:** Sarita Montiel (*Rosina*), Raúl Martínez (*Raúl Castro*), Chula Prieto (*Reina*), Domingo Solder (*Lázaro Castro*), Antonio Espino “Clavillazo” (*Facundo Pérez*), Amparito Arozamena (*Laura*), Maruja Griffel (*head of model school*), Eufrosina García (*Sra. de Silvanita*), Carlota Solares (*Luisa*), Beatriz Saavedra, León Barroso [cut?], Eduardo Arcaraz (*Serafín Silvanita y Napoleón*), Lorraine Chanel & Eliana Banuet (*models*), Martha Mijares (*student model*), Ballet de Ricardo Silva

**Notes:** many Mexican comedies of the 1950s resemble situation comedies, albeit stretched out to feature-length



and with slightly better production values (mostly to accommodate numerous musical numbers). *Se solicitan modelos* is a good example of this, but not a good film: it is generally boring, unamusing, and has a sketchy plot and underdeveloped

characters.

Lázaro Castro operates an upscale fashion house but his business is failing because his designer Facundo—

influenced by Facundo’s wife, the rotund Luisa—caters to wealthy but middle-aged and unattractive customers. Rosina is Lázaro’s assistant, and with her slightly-older friend Laura is studying in the evenings to be a model. Lázaro’s



playboy son Raúl works as a nightclub singer; he is constantly importuning his father for money, which he spends on various girlfriends, such as Reina. Lázaro gives Raúl 5,000 pesos but forbids him to spend it on Reina, an admonition his son ignores. Reina and Raúl concoct a plan whereby Raúl will go to work for his father, bringing in Reina as a “famous European expert on fashion.” The plan succeeds at first, until Lázaro discovers Reina wearing a fur coat purchased by his son: both Raúl and Reina are fired. Lázaro and Facundo hire the student models, including Rosina, for their business. The film concludes with a fashion show/musical extravaganza. Raúl reconciles with his father and also realises Rosina is the woman for him.

Despite the order of billing, this is not a Sarita Montiel vehicle. She has a very subsidiary role, only emerging in the final sequence to sing a song while dressed in a fancy gown. Rosina and Raúl have no particular “romance” throughout the film—early in the movie, Raúl tells his

father he thinks Rosina is attractive but she’s far too *formal* (strait-laced, serious) for him—and their clinch at the end seems contrived and illogical. Raúl Martínez appeared in a number of musicals during the Fifties, and while he’s a competent singer, he’s not really distinctive: he somewhat resembles E. Schillinsky, and would be more convincing as a slightly shady supporting character than as the male lead. The real star of the movie is

Domingo Solder, with Clavillazo as his comic foil.

Most of *Se solicitan modelos* takes place on a handful of bland interior sets. Chano Urueta doesn’t even try to



make things interesting, and it’s hard to imagine this is the same director who made *El monstruo resucitado*, *La bruja*, *El espejo de la bruja*, and *El barón del terror*. Everything is shot and edited in the flattest, most boring style possible. For instance, a sequence of Raúl singing in a nightclub consists of essentially 3 shots, repeated *ad nauseam*: a closeup of Raúl as he sings, a closeup of Reina listening, a closeup of Rosina and Laura listening. The only (very slight) example of non-standard filmmaking occurs during a swimsuit fashion show: the models are on an elevated runway, and Urueta focuses on their bodies from the waist down, as a crowd of men in the background ogle the women and applaud wildly. A disgusted Lázaro wanders in and stares, aghast, at the fleshy spectacle in front of his eyes.



Although the musical sequences themselves are nothing special, a few of the songs are tuneful, including “La gloria eres tú” (sung by an uncredited trio) and “Quién será.” The fashion show sequence that concludes the film features not only songs by Sarita Montiel and Raúl Martínez, but also a rather entertaining 1920s-style “Charleston” dance (for some

reason, nostalgia for the Roaring Twenties pops up in numerous Mexican movies of the Fifties) and a French can-can number performed by (one assumes) Ricardo Silva’s dancers. Although really pointless in the context of the film’s plot, the songs and dances in *Se solicitan modelos* provide about the only bits of entertainment to be found, so their irrelevance shouldn’t be criticised too strongly.





## Arthur Hansl

**Trío y cuarteto** [Trio and Quartet] (Filman Internacional, 1971) *Prod:* Juan Filcher; *Dir:* Sergio Véjar;



*Scr:* Juan Filcher & Sergio Véjar (#1), José Estrada (#2); *Story:* Juan Filcher (#2); *Photo:* Agustín Jiménez; *Music:* Sergio Guerrero; *Prod Mgr:* Antonio

Salazar, Juan Antonio de la Cámara; *Prod Chief:* Alfredo Chavira; *Asst Dir:* Américo Fernández; *Film Ed:* Alfredo Rosas Priego; *Decor:* Jesús Durán; *Lighting:* Mariano García; *Camera Op:* J. Guadalupe García; *Makeup:* Sara Mateos; *Re-rec:* Ramón Moreno; *Sound:* Manuel Topete; *Sound Ed:* Sigfrido García; *Union:* STPC; Eastmancolor

**Cast:** “Trío”—Enrique Novi (*Sergio*), Arthur Hansel (*husband*), Lina Michel (*Suzanne*), José Luis Caro (*René*), Sonia Fuentes (*René’s wife*); “Cuarteto”—Pedro Armendáriz [Jr.] (*Javier*), Ana Martín (*Silvia*), Ernesto Vilches [nieto] (*Felipe*), Lina Montes (*Silvia’s mother*), Avi Maor (*Jaime*) Manuel Rivera, Karin Egede, Pauline About, Ruthie Fields, Soledad Berrio A., Marlene Weiner, Joy Palmer

**Notes:** multi-story films in Mexican cinema date back to the 1950s (for instance, *Tres citas con el destino*; *Pueblo, canto y esperanza*; *Canasta de cuentos mexicanos*), and in the late 1960s the format became popular in the spicy-comedy genre (*Besos, besos y más besos*; *El amor y esas cosas*, *El cuerpazo del delito*, and so on). *Trío y cuarteto* was apparently conceived as another 3-story anthology, but the first episode (*Dúo*) was split off and became the “Amantes” section of *Novios y amantes*. *Trío y cuarteto* was left with two stories, although it still manages to fill approximately 90 minutes of running time. “Trío” takes place in Acapulco, but at the end of the episode the protagonists drive off in their auto, arriving in Taxco, which is the setting of “Cuarteto” (a similar linking-transition can be seen at the end of “Dúo,” except in this instance the link leads nowhere, since this story was split off and became the second tale of another movie).

“Trío” is essentially a one-joke story stretched out excessively. Filmed in and around the Paraíso Marriott in Acapulco, the episode begins as a “foreign” couple arrives on vacation. Unnamed husband (let’s call him Art, for the sake of brevity) and wife Suzanne are wealthy globe-trotters, but ennui has begun to affect their lives. Art drinks too much and can’t perform in bed, although he and Suzanne are still in love and want to preserve their marriage. Suzanne catches the eye of Sergio, a handsome young Mexican who proceeds to follow her around, making joking-but-serious indecent propositions. Suzanne finally responds to his attention and they make love on the

beach. Later, she says Art has gone out for the evening and Sergio comes to her hotel room. They climb into bed but Art is actually in the bathroom, shaving with a straight razor. He enters the bedroom, razor in hand, to find his wife in the embrace of another man...fade to black. The next morning, Suzanne awakes, with Art sleeping on one side of her and Sergio on the other.

“Trío” doesn’t indicate that Suzanne and Art knew this *menage-a-trois* would rekindle their sex life: in fact, in an earlier



scene they have dinner with another married couple, and the husband tells Art that he takes “extraordinary measures” to remain sexually interested in his wife. Later, Suzanne asks Art about a small box (we can’t see the contents) and he says it’s an “extraordinary measure” (which apparently doesn’t work). On the other hand, Art’s presence in the hotel room after Suzanne has specifically told Sergio that he is gone suggests that the threesome was a plan that she and Art concocted at some point, even if it wasn’t something they’d planned well in advance.

Sergio is rather amusing and ingenuous, particularly for someone whose actions are those of a relentless seducer of *gringa* tourists. He refuses to take no for an answer, but he seems sincere enough in his affection for Suzanne, and is not simply a cynical gigolo. Suzanne and Art are a bit too jaded to be entirely sympathetic figures. The performances are generally good, although Lina Michel is burdened with a huge and ugly platinum wig in most scenes. She has several topless and rear-view nude scenes, but there’s no full-frontal nudity in either episode.

“Cuarteto” takes place in the colonial-era city of Taxco (also in the state of Guerrero, where Acapulco is located,



albeit much farther inland), a major tourist destination. Silvia, visiting the city with her mother, suffers a minor cut when artist Javier drops a bottle from the

window of his apartment. Javier apologises and bandages the cut; Silvia is fascinated by his bohemian lifestyle, and asks for a small painting as a souvenir. Later, Silvia spots Javier in a restaurant and gets him to autograph the artwork, to her mother’s disgust.

Some time later, Javier is surprised to discover Silvia (suitcase in hand) on his doorstep. To escape her overbearing mother, Silvia claimed to be pregnant and was

promptly ejected from their home. Now she plans to live and work in Taxco. Javier offers to allow her to stay with him until she finds a job, a suggestion she accepts with alacrity. Eventually, they sleep together—her story about being pregnant was a lie, and in fact Silvia was a virgin—but Javier refuses to consider any sort of permanent relationship. When Silvia shows signs of domesticity and the desire to change his ways, Javier complains to his friends Felipe and Jaime. They convince him to prove his free-spirited nature by allowing them to have sex with Silvia. However, this has the opposite effect (particularly when Silvia appears to enjoy her time with Jaime): Javier becomes possessive and when Silvia packs up to go home, he begs her to stay.

“Cuarteto” is quite enjoyable until the end, when Silvia is basically raped by Felipe and Jaime (although, as noted, she eventually sounds like she’s having a good time with Jaime). Once again, the story is essentially a long build-up to an “ironic” pay-off:



Javier the hippie-artist becomes jealous and tosses his “free love” beliefs out of the window. Up to this point, the episode is amusing, largely due to Ana Martín’s perky performance as Silvia, ably seconded by Pedro Armendáriz Jr. and Lina Montes. The scene in which Silvia and her mother first enter Javier’s apartment is very witty, with the older woman acerbically commenting on Javier’s “art” and lifestyle. For example, a nude woman is posing for him, but Silvia’s mother notes that Javier’s art is all abstract: “she’s nude for *that*?” “Not for that,” Javier replies. He adds that she’s a *gringa* who poses because she wants to feel she’s contributing to his work, even though he isn’t using her as a model.

The pretentious conversations between Javier and his friends regarding their rejection of society’s mores are intended to be ironic, but grow tedious after a time: the episode could have been trimmed a bit to eliminate some of these.

The production values of *Trío y cuarteto* are fine. The location shooting is still largely restricted to interiors (the hotel in Acapulco, Javier’s apartment in Taxco) and a few limited exterior locations, so there isn’t much of a travelogue feel about the picture, but the locations themselves are effective and the photography, music, etc., are fine.

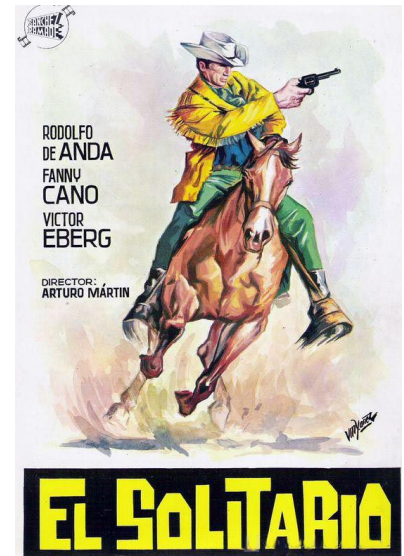
This film does not seem as “sophisticated” today as it might have in 1971, but it’s not horribly dated and it is reasonably entertaining.



## Billy the Kid x 2

### El Solitario [The Solitary One]

(Radeant Films, 1963) *Prod*: Raúl de Anda Serrano [aka Raúl de Anda Jr.]; *Dir*: Arturo Martínez; *Scr*: Raúl de Anda; *Photo*: Fernando Álvarez G. Cabiati; *Prod Mgr*: José L. Murillo; *Co-Dir*: Alberto Mariscal; *Film Ed*: Federico Landeros; *Art Dir*: Artis Gener; *Camera Op*: Raúl Domínguez; *Makeup*: Graciela Muñoz; *Dialog Rec*: Enrique L. Rendón; *Re-rec*: Enrich [sic] Henkel; *Union*: STIC



**Cast**: Rodolfo de Anda (*Billy the Kid*), Dagoberto Rodríguez (*David Salazar*), Fanny Cano (*Laura Salazar*), Carlos López Moctezuma (*Nacho García*), Rogelio Guerra (*Rubén Souza*), Sergio Barrios (*Carlos Salazar*), Hortensia Santoveña (*Sra. Julia García*), Víctor Eberg (*Largo*), José Chávez Trowe (*comisario*), Armando Arreola (*old drunk*), Pascual García Peña (*doctor*), Consuelo Frank (*doña María*), Víctor Alcocer (*storekeeper*), Emilio Gálvez (*Sr. González*), José L. Murillo (*railway agent*), Aurora Walker (*Sra. González*), Jesús Gómez (*posse member*), Arturo Martínez (*man who posts "Wanted" poster*)

**Notes**: in 1963, Rodolfo de Anda began appearing in the “El Texano” series, which eventually numbered 8 films over an 8-year period (6 starring de Anda and two featuring Rogelio Guerra). However, he also appeared in two “Billy the Kid” features in 1963, *El Solitario* and the sequel, *Duelo en el desierto*. There isn’t much to distinguish Manuel Saldívar “El Texano” from William “Billy the Kid” Bonney, at least in these movies: they are all competent, if routine, B-Westerns.

As *El Solitario* begins, Billy the Kid crosses the border



into Mexico; the pursuing posse halts, but one of the men shoots Billy’s horse. Some time later, a weary and parched Billy meets Nacho García, headed for the town of Santa Gertrudis. Nacho shares his food and water with the younger man, and

offers to give him a ride as well, but a shot rings out and Nacho is badly wounded. Billy drops off the injured man at the man’s home, then heads for town to find the local doctor, who is attending the 18th birthday party of Laura, the sister of wealthy rancher David Salazar. The doctor is reluctant to go—the whole town dislikes Nacho because he

served under Santa Ana and is considered a "traitor"--but Laura convinces him to accompany Billy.



Nacho's wife Julia asks Billy to help out on their ranch while Nacho is recovering. His presence irritates Rubén, David's partner in a scheme to buy up all of the surrounding land, and Laura's fiancé. Laura expresses her opposition to this match, and is confined to

her room. David spots Billy talking to her through the window: he lassoes the young man and drags him through the streets of town. Despite his injuries, Billy is determined to help Laura break free from her cruel brother's domination. However, he promises Laura he won't shoot David.

Billy does have a gunfight with Rubén and his henchman Largo, who--with David Salazar--are behind the attempt on the life of Nacho. Nacho's ranch is the only thing preventing them from selling a right-of-way to the railroad and thus becoming rich. Rubén and Largo are both killed, and Billy defeats David in a fistfight, winning Laura's freedom and her affection.

[In the sequel, *Duelo en el desierto*, Billy and Laura marry but David Salazar continues to plague them.]

*El Solitario* is an interesting film with a decent script,



particularly in the area of characterisation (the plot about villains buying up or stealing land that is coveted by the railroad is a familiar one). Although Billy's backstory isn't given any screen time, he is identified as the famed gunfighter Billy the Kid, and demonstrates his quick-draw

pro prowess in one scene. More time is spent on the Salazar family: older brother David, his younger brother Carlos, and sister Laura. Carlos tries to be the peacemaker, but David refuses to compromise at all, striking Laura with his hand and, later, a whip, in an attempt to break her spirit. Laura is a decent, kind-hearted person who displays a steely streak, refusing to marry Rubén and going on a



hunger strike when she's locked in her room. The idea that Nacho and his wife are ostracised by the townspeople over an old political feud is a clever touch. Rubén is a vain, boastful villain who--due to his education in the USA--sprinkles his

dialogue with English words. Even supporting characters like the town's *comisario*--who refuses to obey the orders of Salazar and tries to maintain order as best he can--and an old drunk who warns Billy of impending danger (in

gratitude for a round of drinks purchased for him by the young man) are given a fair amount of screen time and character development.

The production values are adequate, and while there isn't an over-abundance of action scenes, the film isn't dull.

Perhaps the major flaw is the right-hand turn the plot takes about halfway through the movie: after going to a considerable amount of trouble to set up the situation whereby Billy becomes the protector of Nacho and his wife, the film then ignores



them for most of the second half of the movie, focusing instead on the relationship between Laura and Billy, and Laura's strained relationship with her older brother. Billy's supposedly "helping out" on the ranch while Nacho is bed-ridden, but other than going for supplies a couple of times --which conveniently takes him into town so he can meet Laura and/or clash with Rubén, David, etc.--we never see Billy doing any ranch chores (and in fact he doesn't seem to spend much time on the ranch at all). There's nothing



wrong with this second plot, but it seems a little callous to introduce the Garcías and then essentially discard them (the only reason Largo--who was the sniper who shot Nacho early in the movie--doesn't finish them off is because the

*comisario* and some of his men are camping out at the ranch when he makes another attempt).

Arturo Martínez was a character actor specialising in villainous roles who started directing films for the de Anda family in 1959 (later forming his own production company in the 1970s). Martínez was a very competent director whose films have a bit more energy and polish than those made by more routine journeyman filmmakers. He varies his angles, moves his camera, cuts efficiently, and turns in a slick and entertaining product in *El Solitario*.

Overall, this is a routine but generally enjoyable Western with a bit more depth of characterisation than usual.



**Su precio...unos dólares** [Your Price: Some Dollars] (Radeant Films, 1969) *Dir:* Raúl de Anda Jr.; *Adapt:* Raúl de Anda; *Story:* Alfredo Ruanova; *Photo:* Raúl Domínguez; *Music:* Enrico C. Cabiati; *Prod Mgr:* José L. Murillo; *Asst Dir:* Ángel Rodríguez; *Film Ed:* Sergio Soto; *Art Dir:* Raúl Cárdenas; *Makeup:* Victoria Celis; *Dialog Rec:* Consuelo J. Rendón; *Re-rec:* Heinrich Henkel; *Sound Ed:* Ignacio Soto; *Union:* STIC; Eastmancolor, Mexiscope

**Cast:** Rodolfo de Anda (*William Bonney*), Sonia Furió (*Jane Canary*), Pedro Armendáriz [Jr.] (*Sam Bass*), Jorge



Russek (*Cherokee Bill*), Mario Almada (*sheriff*), Rafael Baledón (*Doc Middleton*), Juan Gallardo (*banker*), Juliancito Bravo (*Dave*), Mario Cid (*Raymond*), Victorio Blanco (*bartender*), Luis Guevara (*waiter*), Fernando Yapur & Juan Garza (*card players*), ?Guillermo Hernández Jr. (*card spy*), Alfredo Gutiérrez (*Joe, blacksmith*), Dagoberto Rodríguez (*Ranger captain*), José L. Murillo (*doctor*), Manuel Dondé (*stage line clerk*), Hernando Name (*Ranger*)

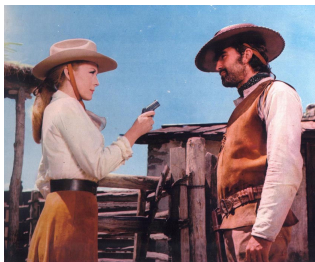
**Notes:** although a large number of Westerns were made



in Mexico in the 1950s and early 1960s, it was not until the late Sixties that “adult” Westerns began to make their mark. Previous films were more reminiscent of standard Hollywood “B” Westerns, but the influence of spaghetti Westerns can be seen in the work of Alberto Mariscal and other directors as the 1960s drew to a close.

*Su precio...unos*

*dólares* does not seem as spaghetti-like as some of Mariscal’s pictures—or even works by others, such as *Chico Ramos* (José Delfos) or *Juan el desalmado* (Miguel Morayta)—but it features some elements of the genre, including ruthless characters, explicit violence, and even a very nice, spaghetti-influenced instrumental theme by Enrico C. Cabiati (perhaps coincidentally, an Italian composer who had immigrated to Mexico). The plot is actually more reminiscent of a “caper” movie, with various individuals banding together to commit a robbery then betraying each other over the spoils.



After her brother Johnny is shot to death by Raymond, Jane offers a reward for the killer’s capture. William “Billy” Bonney saves Raymond from certain death at the hands of some Apaches, then kills the outlaw when he tries to avoid being taken back to town for trial. Jane pays Billy but he asks for more—Jane herself! They sleep together. Jane’s brother had conspired with the town banker to steal \$100,000 in gold that will temporarily be in the bank: now that he’s dead, Jane assumes leadership of the robbery plan. Outlaws Sam, Doc, and Cherokee Bill had already been contacted by Johnny; Jane adds Billy to the gang.

While the others distract the Rangers guarding the gold, Jane, the banker, and Billy smuggle it into a wagon and Billy drives out of town. Cherokee Bill kills Dave, a young boy who is the (absent) sheriff’s unofficial assistant, then the outlaws flee as well. Jane and the banker pretend

to have been victims rather than participants in the assault. Billy discovers the strongbox contains only rocks—Sam, Doc, and Cherokee Bill accuse him of betraying them, but soon realise it is Jane who is behind the swindle. The gang returns to town, where the sheriff and Cherokee Bill kill each other (the sheriff is mortally wounded but impales Cherokee Bill with a pitchfork before he dies). Jane shoots Billy and abandons him to die, as she and the banker depart on the stage with the gold.



Sam and Doc stop the stage; Sam shoots the banker, but Doc is badly wounded. Sam decides to leave him behind, but Billy arrives and in the ensuing melee, Doc kills Sam and Jane flees in the stagecoach. Billy shoots her. Billy and Doc, both wounded, walk off into the desert together.

Rodolfo de Anda had previously played “Billy the Kid” in *El solitario* and *Duelo en el desierto* (both 1963). In *Su precio...unos dólares* he’s joined by “Calamity Jane” and “Sam Bass,” or at least characters bearing those names, although their roles in the film don’t exactly match the actions of their historical namesakes, and Furió’s “Calamity Jane” resembles neither Doris Day nor the definitely

unglamorous Robin Weigert of the “Deadwood” TV series: most of the time she wears very feminine outfits and eschews gunplay.

The performances in *Su precio...unos dólares* are solid,



although Sonia Furió is given the lion’s share of the “acting!” moments. She oscillates between irate, conciliatory, and manipulative. None of these are particularly attractive traits, so the movie in some ways resembles a *film noir*, complete with scheming *femme fatale*. One could attempt to rationalise her actions because she’s a single woman alone in a hostile, male-dominated society, but Jane doesn’t have a scene in which she attempts to justify her treacherous behaviour and lies as the only way she can survive in the Old West. Furió is quite good in the role, never sympathetic but cleverly displaying various façades as needed.

The rest of the cast is fine, although no one gets much character development. Curiously, neither Mario Almada nor Juan Gallardo’s character is given a proper name, and both have substantial supporting roles. The Sheriff almost appears to be in a different movie, since he’s “out of town” at crucial points and only interacts with the main players briefly. He does have a big fight scene with Cherokee Bill

that ends with both characters dead, which effectively removes him from the rest of the picture.



The production values are adequate. Much of the movie takes place on a Western town set, but a fair amount of footage was shot on location in the desert. There are sufficient extras, and the sets and costumes are satisfactory. Raúl de Anda Jr. wasn't an especially

stylish director, but there's nothing wrong with his work here. In addition to the battle to the death between the Sheriff and Cherokee Bill, there's also a fairly nice saloon brawl; on the other side of the ledger, the scene in which Raymond fights off hostile Apaches goes on much too long before Billy arrives to (temporarily) save the killer.

Not one of the top-notch Mexican Westerns of this era, but generally a decent piece of entertainment.



## More Cine Nostalgia Rarities

### El vuelo de la muerte [The Flight of Death]



(Ramón Pereda, 1933) *General Supervisor*: Ramón Pereda; *Assoc Prod*: Antonio Cerro, Rosendo Regato, Salvador Gómez; *Dir*: Guillermo Calles; *Adapt/Story*: Guz Águila; *Photo*: Ezequiel Carrasco; *Music/Songs*: Jorge del Moral; *Music Arr*: Max Urban; *"Rapsodia mexicana"*: Federico Ruiz; *Prod Mgr*: Jesús Pereda; *Asst Dir*:

Carlos L. Cabello; *Film Ed*: Ramón Pereda (uncredited); *Art Dir*: Julio Cano; *Sound*: Rodríguez Hermanos

**Cast**: Ramón Pereda (*Capt. León Salcedo*), Adriana Lamar (*Adriana Flores*), Jorge del Moral (*Jorge del Moral*), Julio Villareal (*Col. Romero*), Sara García (*doña Clara*), G. de Velasco (*don Antonio*), Luis G. Barreiro (*Carlitos*), Rosa Castro (*nurse*), Andrés Buquelli (*doctor*), E. Perdomo (*general*), C. L. Cabello, Pili Castellanos (*young Adriana*), V.G. Aguilera (*young León*), Cuerpo de Baile de Manuel Sevilla, La Orquesta Típica de Policía (dir. by M. Lerdo de Tejada)

**Notes**: in spite of a handful of effective technical factors, *El vuelo de la muerte* is a very weak film overall, overloaded with musical numbers and featuring some embarrassing dialogue and situations. The version of this film screened on Cine Nostalgia is, as expected, in fairly

poor condition; it has a 70-minute running time, but neither García Riera nor any other source I've checked seems to list an original length, so it's impossible to determine if any significant amount of footage is missing.

In Los Angeles in 1917, don Antonio tells young León that the boy can grow up to become a famous pilot as his late father wished, if he dedicates himself to study. Antonio's wife, doña Clara, says she wants their daughter Adriana to grow up to be a "modern woman." "Are you going to be a *comunista* or an *agrarista*?" her father asks, jokingly.

Time passes. León is now a member of the Mexican Air Force. In 1932, don Antonio falls gravely ill. Before he dies, he makes Adriana and León vow to marry, and they agree. A short time later, Adriana meets composer Jorge del Moral at her birthday party; after she sings one of his songs, he says she could have a career on the stage. León is opposed to this, but he says he won't stand in Adriana's way. Soon, Adriana is a popular performer. She also realises she doesn't love León romantically, preferring Jorge. Jorge gives Adriana a friendship ring, while León presents her with a wedding dress, causing a rift between the two.



Meanwhile, Spanish aviators Barberán and Collar are overdue on their flight from Cuba. [In real life, the two men flew from Sevilla to Cuba, then vanished on the next

leg of their aerial journey and were never found.] Still irritated at Adriana, León joins the massive search, leaving during a storm. His plane crashes and he is horribly disfigured. Nonetheless, he keeps his word to don Antonio, and



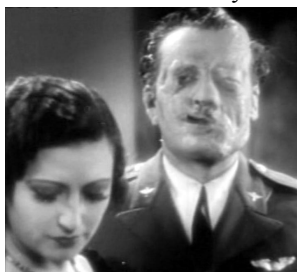
marries Adriana. On their wedding night, León bids his wife farewell, then gets in a plane and flies off to his own death. His fellow officers stand on the tarmac and salute as he departs.

The central premise of *El vuelo de la muerte* is melodramatic and illogical: why do León and Adriana get married? She doesn't love him, he knows it, and he's a physical wreck besides: it's not as if they were married and then he was in an accident, or that there is some other compelling reason to keep their word to her father, particularly since she loves someone else who will presumably care for her.

This point aside, there are, as noted earlier, good and bad points to *El vuelo de la muerte*. On the positive side



of the ledger, the "horror" makeup of León's scarred face is quite impressive and frightening. Also, there is some interesting stock footage of historical interest as well as newly-shot scenes of 1930s-vintage airplanes and such. The filmmakers went to the trouble to create a very nice



mock-up of an airplane (with a propeller that spins and everything) for shots of León flying during the storm. *El vuelo de la muerte* also seems to have had a decent budget, or at least a highly competent production manager, since there are several scenes with elaborate settings and substantial extras.

While the picture's direction is generally functional if not stylish, there is a technically audacious scene in which Adriana confronts herself in a mirror: the mirror image is wearing a wedding gown while "real" Adriana is not. This seems to have been



accomplished by using a double for Adriana Lamar (shot from behind), and having Lamar herself stand behind a sheet of glass "in" the mirror; during the scene, the "real" Adriana tosses a bouquet of flowers at her reflection, and it bounces off the mirror. At the end of the scene

there is a rapid, almost imperceptible fade-to-black, and mirror-Adriana (in the wedding gown) has been replaced by a reflection of the real Adriana in a dark dress: oddly enough, this *also* appears to have been accomplished by use of a double, since the movements of Adriana and her "reflection" are not in sync. When the angle changes—as Adriana's mother enters the



room—the mirror is once again a real mirror. This brief sequence appears to have taken a certain amount of ingenuity to accomplish, and this is admirable.

Unfortunately, the weak points of *El vuelo de la muerte* are far more obtrusive and annoying than the nice bits. Adriana Lamar was Ramón Pereda's wife and frequent co-star until her untimely death in 1945; not conventionally "movie-star" attractive, she was nonetheless a decent actress when cast appropriately. In *El vuelo de la muerte*, she is compelled to sing multiple songs in various venues, and to be brutally frank...she's not that good. And having people in the movie praise her musical talent doesn't really convince *me*, to be honest. These songs go on and on and on...

To a much lesser extent, a similar thing occurs when "famous composer" Jorge del Moral arrives at Adriana's birthday party. Everyone (especially Adriana) praises him effusively, as if he were a combination of Agustín Lara and Mozart. One wonders if del Moral blushed modestly at the compliments, or—conversely—if he wrote the dialogue for this scene himself.

The musical sequences in *El vuelo de la muerte* do not merely grate on the ears, they also consume far too much of the film's running time. Another culprit is the abundant stock footage. Stock footage has its uses, but *El vuelo de la muerte* relentlessly pads its running time with extended scenes of

Mexican troops allegedly searching for the missing Spanish aviators, intercut with (presumably real) newspaper headlines about the case, repeated



shots of newspapers being printed, dates superimposed on the screen, and so forth. This might have been more acceptable if the film was *about* the search for Barberán and Collar, but it's not: this is only a pretext for León to take off on a dangerous mission, crash, and wind up badly injured. In fact Barberán and Collar were *never* found, so the audience doesn't even get that bit of closure.

The performances vary widely. Ramón Pereda is professional, Adriana Lamar overacts slightly but within the parameters of film melodrama. Jorge del Moral is stiff



but he wasn't primarily an actor so that's understandable. Sara García, in an early sound film role (she had previously appeared in a handful of silent features), provides comic relief as Adriana's ditsy mother (when introduced to the "famous composer" Jorge del Moral, she praises him for having written the national anthem!). Luis G. Barreiro has a very brief part (at least in the version I've seen); the only other recognisable performer is Julio Villareal, who plays León's commanding officer.

Stripped of the irrelevant stock footage and the tedious musical numbers, *El vuelo de la muerte* would be a very short melodrama with some interesting aspects.



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