

THE MEXICAN FILM BULLETIN

VOLUME 19 NUMBER 3

MAY-JUNE 2013

ARIEL AWARDS 2013

The 55th Ariel Awards ceremony was held on 28 May 2013 in the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City. *El*



premio won 4 prizes, including Best Film, while *El fantástico mundo de Juan Orol* and *La vida precoz y breve de*

Sabina Rivas received 3 awards each. Lifetime Achievement Arieles de Oro were awarded to actress Columba Domínguez, actor Mario Almada (shown above), and director Rafael Corkidi.

2013 ARIELES (winners in bold)

Best Film

El premio

La demora

Los últimos cristeros de Luc, la película

Best Direction

Paula Markovitch for *El premio*

Rodrigo Plá for *La demora*

Luis Mandoki for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Matías Meyer for *Los últimos cristeros*

Best Actress

Tessa Ia for *Después de Lucía*

Paula Galinelli Hertzog for *El premio*

Úrsula Pruneda for *El sueño de Lú*

Roxana Blanco for *La demora*

Greisy Mena for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Best Actor

Hernán Mendoza for *Después de Lucía*

Roberto Sosa for *El fantástico mundo de Juan Orol*

Francisco Cruz for *Entre la noche y el día*

Carlos Vallarino for *La demora*

Best Co-Starring Actor

Sharon Herrera for *El premio*

Mari Carmen Farias for *El sueño de Lú*

Angelina Peláez for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Best Co-Starring Actor

Daniel Giménez Cacho for *Colosio el asesinato*

Dagoberto Gama for *Colosio el asesinato*

Gerardo Trejoluna for *El sueño de Lú*

Best Original Screenplay

Michel Franco for *Después de Lucía*

Paula Markovitch for *El premio*

Raúl Fuentes for *Todo el mundo tiene a alguien menos yo*

Best Adapted Screenplay

Laura Santullo for *La demora*

Diana Cardozo for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Israel Cárdenas y Matías Meyer for *Los últimos cristeros*

Best Photography

Carlos Hidalgo for *El fantástico mundo de Juan Orol*

Wojciech Staron for *El premio*

María José Secco for *La demora*

Damián García for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Jerónimo Rodríguez for *Todo el mundo tiene a alguien menos yo*

Best Editing

Valentina Leduc for *Carrière 250 metros*

Lorena Moriconi, Mariana Rodríguez y Paula Markovitch for *El premio*

León Felipe González for *Los últimos cristeros*

Best Sound

Matías Barberis, Jaime Baksht y Pablo Tamez for *Cuates de Australia*

Samuel Larson, Pablo Tamez, Pedro Mejía, Alfredo

Loeza y Miguel Molina Gutiérrez for *El sueño de Lú*

Fernando Cámara y Martín Hernández for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Alejandro de Icaza y Raúl Locatelli for *Los últimos cristeros*

Best Original Music Score

Leonardo Heiblum y Jacobo Lieberman for *Carrière 250 metros*

Alejandro Castaños for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Galo Durán for *Los últimos cristeros*

Best Art Direction

Salvador Parra for *Cristiada*

Óscar Tello y Bárbara Enríquez for *El premio*

Antonio Muñozhiero for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

[no name?] for *Todo el mundo tiene a alguien menos yo*

Best Costumes

Deborah Medina for *El fantástico mundo de Juan Orol*

Victoria Pugliese y Macarena Pazos for *El premio*

Adela Cortázar for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Nohemí González for *Los últimos cristeros*

Best Makeup

Alfredo Mora for *Colosio el asesinato*

David Ruiz Gameros for *Depositarios*
Carla Tinoco y Alfredo García for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Iñiqui Legaspi for *Los últimos cristeros*

Best Visual Effects

Gabriel Kerlegand for *Colosio El asesinato*

Víctor Velázquez y Alejandro Barea for *Depositarios*

Leandro Visconti for *Morelos*

Best Special Effects

Efeccine Mobile Alejandro Vázquez, Salvador Servin

Casas y Guillermo Jiménez Robles for *Depositarios*

Adrián Durán for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas*

Alejandro Vázquez y Sergio Jara for *Morelos*

Best First Work

El fantástico mundo de Juan Orol by Sebastián del Amo

***El premio* by Paula Markovitch**

Todo el mundo tiene a alguien menos yo by Raúl Fuentes

Best Feature-Length Documentary

Carrière 250 metros by Juan Carlos Rulfo, co-director:

Natalia Gil Torner

***Cuates de Australia* by Everardo González**

El paciente interno by Alejandro Solar Luna

La revolución de los alcatrazes by Luciana Kaplan

Palabras mágicas (para romper un encantamiento) by

Mercedes Moncada Rodríguez

Best Fictional Short

***La tiricia o cómo curar la tristeza* by Ángeles Cruz**

Lucy contra los límites de la voz by Mónica Herrera

Para armar un helicóptero by Izabel Acevedo

Best Documentary Short

***La herida se mantiene abierta* by Alberto Cortés**

Las montañas invisibles by Ángel Linares

Mitote by Eugenio Polgovsky

Paal by Christoph Müller y Víctor Vargas Villafuerte

Best Animated Short

Como perros y gatos by Armando Vega- Gil

Dame posada by Cecilio Vargas Torres

***La noria* by Karla Castañeda**

Un ojo by Lorenza Manrique

Best Ibero-American Film

***Blancanieves* by Pablo Berger (Spain)**

No by Pablo Larraín (Chile)

Pescador by Sebastián Cordero (Ecuador)

Lifetime Achievement Ariel de Oro

Mario Almada

Columba Domínguez

Rafael Corkidi



Obituaries

ENRIQUE LIZALDE

Enrique Lizalde, whose 50-year career as an actor encompassed numerous films, *telenovelas*, and plays, died on 3 June 2013 of liver cancer. Enrique Lizalde Chávez was born in the state of Nayarit in 1937 and began acting

professionally in the early 1960s. His distinctive, deep voice served him well in numerous roles on television—including more than 40 *telenovelas*, most recently “Mañana es para siempre” in 2009—on the stage, and in the cinema.



Lizalde’s films include *Viento negro*, *La mentira*, *El escapulario*, *La noche violenta*, *El monasterio de los buitres*, and *Ángela Morante--crimen o suicidio*.

In the late 1970s, Lizalde was one of a group of actors who broke away from actors’ union ANDA and formed the Sindicato de Actores Independientes. The

experiment eventually failed, and a number of the participants were temporarily blacklisted.

Enrique Lizalde is survived by his wife, Tita Greig, four children, and 8 grandchildren.



RAÚL PADILLA “CHÓFORO”

Comic actor Raúl Padilla “Chóforo” died of a heart

attack in Mexico City on 24 May

2013; he was 73 years old. Felipe

Raúl Padilla Inclán was born in

1940, the son of actor Raúl

“Chato” Padilla” and actress Lili

Inclán. Although it’s said his first

“acting” performance came at the

age of 6 months—playing the baby Jesus in a stage

performance—Padilla began to work regularly on TV and

in films in the 1970s, becoming a popular performer in

sexy-comedies of the 1980s. He also worked on the stage

and in numerous TV series and *telenovelas*: at the time of

his death, Padilla was appearing in one of the latter, “Qué bonito amor.”



ALFREDO LANDA

Spanish actor Alfredo Landa, whose frequent roles as the sad-sack protagonist of 1970s comedies gave rise to the term *landismo*, died on 9 May 2013. He was 80 years old.

A former law student, Landa turned to acting in the late 1950s. After making his name in comedy, Landa proved he was an excellent dramatic actor as well, winning two Best Actor Goyas (Spain’s equivalent of the Oscar and Ariel)

and receiving 5 additional nominations in the 1998-2008 period. His most notable films include *El crack* (1981), *Los santos inocentes* (1984), and *El bosque animado* (1987). He retired in 2007 and received a lifetime achievement Goya.



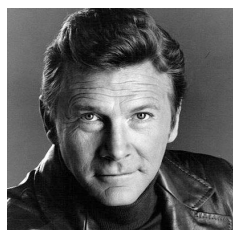
Alfredo Landa appeared in various Spanish-Mexican co-productions during his career, including *El rediezcubrimiento de México*, *Amigo*, *Piernas cruzadas* and *El profesor erótico*.

He is survived by his wife and 3 children.



STEVE FORREST

Steve Forrest, a familiar face in Hollywood films and television shows from the 1950s through the 1990s, died on 18 May 2013 in California; he was 87 years old.



William Forrest Andrews was born in Texas in 1925. After serving in the Army during WWII, Andrews moved to Hollywood and began an acting career. His much older (16 years) brother Dana Andrews was already a leading man, which may have led to the newcomer taking the name "Steve Forrest." He appeared

in numerous films and television shows, including regular stints on "S.W.A.T." and "Dallas."

Steve Forrest's Mexican film connection was his appearance in *The Living Idol*, a U.S.-Mexican coproduction shot in Mexico in 1956.



ENRIQUE LIZALDE FILMS

Ángela Morante--crimen o suicidio [Ángela Morante: Crime or Suicide?]* (CONACITE Dos,



1978) *Dir*: José Estrada; *Scr*: Mauricio Mondolfi, José Estrada; *Photo*: Miguel Garzón; *Music*: Héctor Sánchez; *Prod Mgr*: Hugo D. Green; *Asst Dir*: Francisco

Guerrero; *Film Ed*: Max Sánchez; *Camera Op*: Manuel García; *Makeup*: Graciela Muñoz; *Sound Ed*: Jorge Peña; *Sound Engin*: Consuelo Jaramillo; *Asst to Dir*: Carlos García Agraz; *Re-rec*: Ricardo Saldívar; *Union*: STIC * [some sources put question marks around "Crimen o suicidio" but the title on-screen does not have them.]

Cast: Ana Martín (*Rosa Solórzano*), Enrique Lizalde (*Roberto Lobo*), Rafael Baledón (*don Rodrigo de la Fuente*), Blanca Baldó (*Ángela Morante*), Miguel Ángel Ferriz [nieto] (*Julio Alcántara*), Ariadna Welter (*Madame*), César Castro (*Óscar Zamora*), Paco Sañudo (*Coral*), Ramiro Orci (*Cmdte. of police*), Miguel Manzano (*editor of "La Voz"*), Juan Felipe Preciado (*Felipe Montaña*), Eugenio Cobo (*Paco Simón*), Agustín Silva (*crew member*), Francisco Llopis (*producer*), Alfredo Rosas (*Acapulco*), Eugenia Dolores, Laura Gil, Juan José

Espinosa (*cowboy*), José Antonio Marroz (*himself—ANDA representative*), Marcelo Villamil & Mirón Levine (*men at film screening*); Tomás Pérez Turrent, Fernando Gou, Francisco Sánchez, Jorge Cantú (*themselves—panelists on TV show*)

Notes: tragic tales of film actresses have been popular in Hollywood, Mexico, and (one assumes) elsewhere for many years. In Mexico, *Ambiciosa* (1952), and *La estrella vacía* (1958) are two notable, early examples. Two more examinations of the topic, *Ángela Morante--crimen o suicidio* and *Adriana del Río, actriz*, were produced in 1978.

Ángela Morante--crimen o suicidio is formally quite interesting. Told *Citizen Kane*-style (a reporter investigates the life of a recently-deceased celebrity,

interviewing people who knew them), it mixes current sequences with flashbacks, generally with no film-grammar "warning signs" (i.e., no dissolve, fade, or verbal introduction). To complicate matters



further, several scenes are repeated from different points of view. This nonlinear narrative method isn't confusing or distracting, at least after the first "unannounced" flashback.

[As is our standard practice, the plot synopsis does not attempt to reproduce the *order* of flashbacks in the film, but merely recounts the basic events covered.]

Roberto Lobo, a reporter for "La Voz" newspaper, learns of the death of actress Ángela Morante, an "accidental suicide." At her palatial home, the police admit the press—over the objections of a young woman, apparently a friend or servant—and the photographers take photos of the dead woman's nude corpse. Roberto steals Ángela's address book from her bedside table. Later, at the brothel run by Madame, he is introduced to Rosa Solórzano, a prostitute who turns out to be the young woman from the house. Rosa and Ángela grew up in the



same Veracruz orphanage; while working in Madame's high-class whorehouse, they were offered extra roles in a Western film (they play saloon girls whose tops are ripped off by a drunken

cowboy). Ángela attracts the attention of an agent and develops into a popular and acclaimed actress; Rosa accompanies her as her stand-in.

Ángela becomes the mistress of wealthy banker don Rodrigo, who buys her a huge mansion (Rosa moves in as well); Ángela continues her acting career, with don Rodrigo's blessing. However, while her *patrón* is touring Europe with his family, Ángela meets a young man (Julio) during a street disturbance and takes him home to tend to his injuries. After a 2-week affair, Ángela tells Julio he has to leave because don Rodrigo is returning soon.



Ángela becomes pregnant with Julio's child and has an abortion. When Rodrigo comes back from his trip, Ángela has changed: she is melancholy, doesn't care about her film career, and is increasingly abusing drugs and alcohol. On the night of her birthday, Ángela gets drunk and falls asleep on the

floor of her bedroom. Don Rodrigo covers her up and departs. The next morning she's found dead.

Roberto's editor says Ángela's "accidental suicide" is not dramatic enough, and since Roberto won't name any names—such as that of don Rodrigo (who paid Roberto not to do so)—the story is of no interest. Roberto instead



writes a novel about Ángela's life and death and it becomes a best-seller.

Ángela Morante--crimen o suicidio is an interesting portrait of Ángela and the people in her life, avoiding pat, melodramatic explanations. Ángela, we're informed, had an unhappy childhood, and as an adult

seems to derive little pleasure from life. She's not truly exploited, or at least not to the extent one might see in other films: Madame is not cruel and the brothel is luxurious, with a wealthy and influential clientele who aren't abusive; her film career earns her critical acclaim and public fame; don Rodrigo is a kindly, generous *patrón* who—even when he admits he's no longer sexually attracted to Ángela (when he returns from Europe and finds her changed)—still cares about her and offers his moral and material support.



When Roberto asks Rosa if Ángela began taking pills after her abortion, Rosa replies negatively, saying the drug abuse began "much earlier." There's no revelatory moment in which

Ángela discusses her feelings and behaviour, no suggestion that her life was ruined by one particular event.

The film also treats don Rodrigo, Rosa, and Jorge in a very nuanced manner, neither white-washing nor condemning them. Rosa, who returns to Madame's brothel after Ángela's death, is described as having been a "half-servant, half-friend" of Ángela. Although she sincerely cared about her friend, Rosa admits to Roberto (with whom she has an affair) that she never earned money for being Ángela's companion (the implication is that she'd have been financially better off if she'd remained a prostitute). In one telling sequence, don Rodrigo and Ángela celebrate the latter's birthday in the lavish mansion, serenaded by a score of violinists. Don Rodrigo gives Ángela a costly emerald necklace as a present, and they go upstairs to the bedroom, leaving the birthday cake untouched. Rosa remains seated at the dinner table, listening to the violins play, then cuts herself a slice of cake and sits there to eat it, alone.

Jorge is a rather mysterious figure, who leaps into



Ángela's car during a violent street brawl, begging for assistance. Leopoldo Villarelo Cervantes suggests this sequence is meant to represent the *Halconazo* of

10 June 1971, in which government agents violently attacked student protesters:

<http://www.cineforever.com/2011/06/28/angela-morante-%C2%BFcrimen-o-suicidio-de-jose-estrada/>

Since Jorge was a victim of the attack, this would seem to indicate he was a student rather than one of the government *halcones*. Jorge doesn't recognise Ángela (saying "I don't watch Mexican cinema"), has longish hair, etc., other "student" attributes. However, he is later employed as a clerk in one of don Rodrigo's banks, wears a suit and tie, has short hair and a moustache, and is married. He returns to visit Ángela after seeing one of her films, and is awkwardly introduced to don Rodrigo as a "friend from back home." Jorge's short-lived relationship with Ángela was not, it appears, the "trigger" for her depression and death, nor does he seem to have been unduly affected by the memory of it.

Although

Roberto Lobo plays a more prominent role in *Ángela Morante--crimen o suicidio* than, for example, his investigative counterpart in *Citizen Kane*, his background and personality are not explored in the film. Roberto is a



dogged reporter who is willing to break some rules (he steals Ángela's address book, for example) but accepts money from don Rodrigo to suppress the older man's identity, and similarly agrees to keep Jorge's name out of his story (for free). After two months, his editor pulls the plug on the investigation and Roberto accepts this without protest, merely switching to fiction-mode and writing Ángela's tale in novel form. This is less melodramatic and more realistic than one might expect: Roberto doesn't quit in protest, doesn't stand on journalistic ideals, he simply changes direction in a professional manner.

In one amusing bit of "business" in *Ángela Morante--crimen o suicidio*, Roberto is frequently depicted eating, particularly in the company of those he's interviewing for his story. He also doesn't smoke, instead consuming "Salvavidas" (a literal translation of "Lifesavers" candy).

The performances in the movie are top-notch. Blanca Baldó, a Venezuelan actress with little or no film experience, is restrained and effective: she's attractive without being glamorous or fake, and although the script doesn't give her any ACTING! moments, she's quite convincing. Rafael Baledón makes don Rodrigo very sympathetic, and Enrique Lizalde and Ana Martín are good as well. Miguel Ángel Ferriz *nieto* at first plays a variation on his standard "modern youth" persona, but shows wider range as the older, more mature Jorge. The supporting roles are also performed effectively, without undue melodramatics.

Ángela Morante--crimen o suicidio is an extremely well-made film, carefully crafted and full of interesting details. There are a few moments where it strays off-course—it's unclear until late in the movie that Roberto has spent two months retracing Ángela's life, for example, and in fact the exact timeline of her final year is somewhat muddled and inconsistent—but for the most part the script is quite good, intelligent and not a hackneyed rehash. The production values are fine, the cast is strong, and the music score is especially noteworthy. An added bonus are a few not entirely realistic but still interesting "behind the scenes in the Mexican film industry" sequences.



El hombre y la bestia [The Man and the Beast]
(Estudios América, 1972) *Exec Prod:* Alfredo Ruanova;
Dir: Julián Soler; *Scr:* Alfredo Ruanova; *Orig. Story:*
[Robert] Louis Stevenson ("The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll
and Mr. Hyde"); *Photo:* Javier Cruz R.; *Music:* Ernest
Cortázar [Jr.]; *Prod Mgr:* Daniel Bautista; *Asst Dir:*
Fernando Durán Rojas; *Film Ed:* Raúl Casso; *Camera Op:*
Alberto Arellanos, Agustín Lara; *Makeup:* Antonio
Ramírez; *Dialog Rec:* Consuelo Jaramillo; *Recordist:*
Roberto Munguía; *Union:* STIC

Cast: Enrique Lizalde (*Dr. Enrique Duval*; *Eduardo Ray*), Sasha Montenegro (*Bettina*), Carlos López Moctezuma (*Dr. Ramos*), Eduardo Noriega (*Lic. Menéndez*), Julián Pastor (*Inspector Blanco*), Nancy Compare (*Nora Ramos*), Mauricio de Ferrari (*Abel*), Rebeca Silva (*bargirl*), Jorge Fegan (*obnoxious man in saloon*), Juan José Martínez Casado (*Pablo, butler*), Pedro Regueiro (*Nora's brother*), José Luis Avendaño (*plainclothes policeman*), Marco Contreras, Arturo Guzmán, Odila Dupeyrón (*?little girl*), Susana Alvarez, Jorge Victoria (*man who helps little girl*), Guillermo Segura

Notes: shot in November 1972 (immediately after *Satanás de todos los horrores*, made by the same crew and sharing several main cast members), *El hombre y la bestia* was Mexico's second version of Robert Louis Stevenson's oft-filmed "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." However, the previous version, *Pacto diabólico* (1967), took greater liberties with the story than this film did (and was somewhat more interesting). *El hombre y la bestia* is a very bland movie, shot on nondescript sets, lacking compelling characters, and harmed by the crude makeup of the Mr. Hyde character (here called "Eduardo Ray"). The movie is set in early 20th-century Mexico (electric lights and the telephone are in use, but no cars are seen) but Emilio García Riera points out a curious anachronism, writing that "not even Porfirio Díaz" (the president at the time) would have been capable of paying the million pesos demanded by Bettina as blackmail (this amount would have been conceivable in 1972, but not in the early 1900s).



In a pre-credits sequence, Dr. Enrique Duval makes a presentation to a scientific meeting, explaining his theory that man has two essential natures, good and evil. A short time later, we see the evil side: the ugly Eduardo Ray (big eyebrows, big teeth, and a really big nose) bumps into a little girl vendor on a



darkened street, flies into a rage, and savagely beats her. Ray is pursued and cornered by some men, who--upon learning the girl was not severely injured--accept his offer to pay for the damages, in part with a check signed by Enrique. Enrique has also made Ray his heir, a fact that disturbs his lawyer.



Ray visits a cabaret and presents singer Bettina with a ring, temporarily overcoming her repugnance. However, the next time they meet she definitively rejects him. A drunk picks this moment to insult Ray--"What cage did you escape from?"--and is beaten and strangled for his ill-timed comment. Ray eludes the police. Afterwards, Duval claims Ray sent him a letter and left the country. But the audience soon sees Duval drink a potion which turns him into Ray. A flashback sequence (narrated by Duval as he writes in his journal) shows how Duval created the formula that alternately unleashes his evil side (Ray) and returns him to normality (Duval).

Realizing his double life is dangerous, Duval breaks



off his engagement to Nora, the daughter of his friend Dr. Ramos. Bettina and her boyfriend Abel, learning Ray stands to inherit Duval's fortune, scheme to obtain some of the

money. Abel follows Ray to Duval's house one night, and the next day Bettina arrives and blackmails Duval (she thinks he is hiding Ray). However, instead of delivering the money to Bettina's apartment, Duval changes into Ray, murders her and Abel, then eludes the pursuing police again. Deciding to transform no more, Duval reconciles with Nora. To celebrate, they go to the restaurant where Bettina used to work (it was Nora's choice). Duval notices his hands becoming bestial (like Ray's) and runs home to drink the formula that will return him to his Duval-ness. Nora, understandably curious at being stranded in the restaurant, calls her fiancé; he begins to change back into Ray as they speak on the phone, and urges Bettina to come

to his house. Duval's butler witnesses his employer's transformation and is murdered by Ray.

Nora shows up and Ray tries to force her to drink the potion ("so we can be together in hell"); she struggles, and it appears Ray is trying to rape her when police inspector Blanco shows up (his men were watching Duval's house). Ray and Blanco fight and the monstrous killer seems to be getting the upper hand, but Nora picks up the policeman's pistol and shoots Ray (twice). When he dies, "Ray" changes back to Duval. Nora is horrified, but Blanco says "Duval was already dead. The one you killed was Ray."

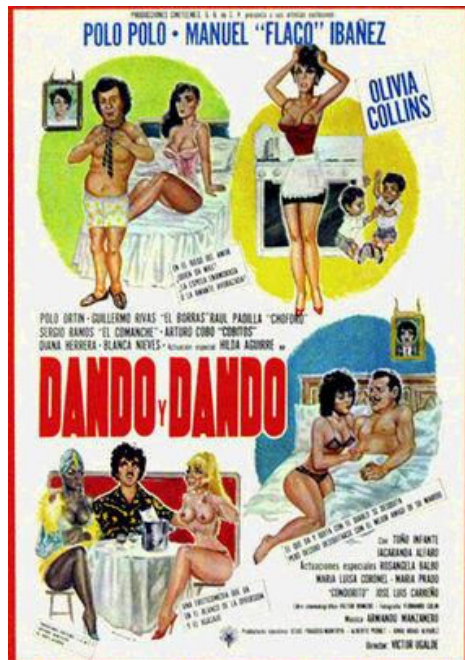


El hombre y la bestia isn't a bad movie, but it isn't very stylish or atmospheric. Given the blandness of the sets, the exterior scenes (= the streets at night) are the most atmospheric parts of the whole film! There's nothing new in the plot, and the characters are quite sketchy (not even Duval-Ray has much of a personality, or personalities). Enrique Lizalde is satisfactory in the dual role, no more (to be fair, he seems to have difficulty talking while wearing the Ray makeup). Sasha Montenegro is adequate (if she looks a little odd, this is one of her pre-nosejob roles), while Nancy Compare is largely a cipher. [García Riera indicates Compare was Hungarian; she seems to have made only one other Mexican movie, 1976's *Chicano*. Her dialogue in *El hombre y la bestia* may have been post-dubbed--if it was, it's a very good job--but she seems to have been speaking fluent Spanish with no "foreign" accent. Curiously, Ruanova and Soler also chose a non-Mexican actress with no particular track record for the lead in their other 1972 horror movie, *Satanás de todos los horrores*. Neither of these roles calls for a foreigner, so it's a bit hard to figure out why they were chosen. Studio politics, perhaps?] Trivia note: Ernesto Cortázar Jr.'s music score is quite "noisy," filled with weird, electronic sounds, organ music, the occasional vocal wailing, etc.

Trivia notes: "El hombre y la bestia" is the traditional Spanish title assigned to Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." An Argentine adaptation of the Stevenson story was made in 1951 and entitled *El extraño caso del hombre y la bestia*.

[This review originally appeared in *The Mexican Film Bulletin* Vol. 12 Number 1, January-February 2006. It has been slightly revised here.]

◆◆◆
CHÓFORO FILMS



Dando y dando* (Prods. Cinetelmex, ©1988) *Exec Prod:* Jesús Fragoso Montoya, Alberto Pedret, Jorge Rojas Alvarez; *Dir:* Víctor Ugalde; *Scr:* Víctor Romero**;
Photo: Fernando Colín; *Music:* Armando Manzanero;
Music Arr: Fernando Ledezma; *Asst Dir:* José Medina Hernández; *Film Ed:* Rogelio Zúñiga; *Camera Op:* José Luis Lemus Sánchez; *Makeup:* Mayra Anel Acosta; *Sound Op:* Manuel Rincón Venegas; *Re-rec:* Ricardo Saldivar; *Union:* STIC

*the Condor Video VHS label gives the title as "Dando y dando...pajarito volando" and "The Roller Coaster of Love," but these do not appear on the film itself. The main title on the print is *Dando y dando* and each "episode" has its own title (and copyright notice, etc.).

** Víctor Ugalde and Víctor Romero are the same person.

Cast: "Palo como a las piñatas"--Polo Polo (*Roberto Zamora*), Olivia Collins (*Patricia*), Sergio Ramos "El Comanche" (*Lic. Zendejas*), Noé Ladrón de Guevara "Condorito" (?*Tomás, executive at Patricia's company*), Toño Infante (*Patricia's boss*), Jacaranda Alfaro (*Roberto's assistant and mistress*), Rosangela Balbó (*Sra. Tijerina, secretary*), María Luisa Coronel, José Luis Carreño, Fernando Corona Gómez, Fernando Pérez Gutiérrez, Gustavo Aguilar "Manotas" (?*Frankenstein monster*), Laura Baque, Federico González (*gluttonous client*), José Villor, Gerardo Soublete, Alfredo Rosas, Alberto Valenzuela, Darwin Solano, Oscar Peredo, Mónica Castro, Irma del Carmen Aviña, Ricardo Alcalá

"Dando y dando"--Manuel "Flaco" Ibáñez (*Ignacio Reyes "El Embragues"*), Polo Ortín (*don Teodoro*), Guillermo Rivas "El Borrás" (*maitre d'*), [Raúl Padilla]

Chóforo (*El Regulador*), Arturo Cobo "Cobitos" (*Servín, customer*), Diana Herrera (*La Güera*), Blanca Nieves ("black" dancer), Hilda Aguirre (*Aurora*)

Notes: this moderately amusing sexy-comedy is unusual for several reasons. First, the multi-story format was not as popular in the 1980s as it had been in the 1960s, and only a handful of movies were made in "parts." Second, *both* stories in this film were remakes (or later remade): "Palo como a las piñatas" strongly resembles an episode in another 1988 Cinetelmex production, *Solo para adulteros*, while "Dando y dando" is an uncredited remake of part of *Chile picante*.

In "Palo como a las piñatas" (about 50 minutes long), ad executive Roberto criticizes his wife Patricia for her (allegedly) poor housekeeping, cooking, and child-rearing abilities (they have two sons), but refuses to participate actively as a father or husband himself (he is also having an affair with his assistant). Returning early from a trip, Patricia catches Roberto in their home with his mistress, and demands a divorce. Her sons remain with Roberto until she can get a good job to support them. Roberto's work suffers since he now has to run the household, and he has little or no time to spend with his mistress; in contrast, Patricia accepts a position as an artist with a rival ad agency and a campaign she supervised wins an award. Zendejas, the head of Roberto's company, offers Patricia a job but she says she won't work in the same company as her husband. As the story ends, Roberto gets a fateful phone call from his soon-to-be former employer...

Comedian Polo Polo is quite unpleasant as the selfish Roberto, who eventually becomes a better father but otherwise never really changes his personality (for example, when Patricia visits he repeatedly tries to lure her into bed--playing on her loneliness and physical needs--although he has just finished having sex with his mistress in the afternoon!). Olivia Collins is cute as always, and the movie definitely takes her side in the dispute, although U.S. viewers may find it odd that *she* is the one who moves out of the house and leaves the children behind, since this would rarely occur in a divorce in the USA. The rest of the cast is satisfactory, although only Alfaro and Ramos have much to do (Alfaro, rather sympathetic in her role, has several topless scenes).

The script is efficient and even contains a couple of unusually witty bits of dialogue. In an early scene, Patricia admonishes one of her sons, who is feeding cereal to the family's pet parrot: "Don't feed that garbage to Lorenzo! It's for *you* to eat!" And when Roberto's mistress emerges from the closet where he has tried to hide her from his wife, she dissimulates, asking "Does the bus to downtown stop here?" before walking out.

Trivia notes: apparently both of the ad agencies in this picture are involved with motion picture promotion (although they also create campaigns for other products), since Roberto's office contains posters for various (real) movies like *Te quiero*, and Patricia wins the award for her poster for *Ulama*. Also, the film opens with Roberto

having a nightmare in which he is being chased through dark woods by the Frankenstein monster (wearing a commercially-made rubber mask). Roberto says "don't kill me!" but the monster (who speaks) apparently has amorous, not murderous intentions!

"Dando y dando" (about 40 minutes in length) is also moderately amusing. It is an uncredited remake of "Los compadres," part of *Chile picante* (written and directed by René Cardona Jr.). Aside from changing the protagonists from bureaucrats to auto mechanics, the plot is remarkably similar. Flaco Ibáñez, Chóforo, and Hilda Aguirre replace Héctor Suárez, Lalo "El Mimo," and Patricia Rivera in the major roles.

El Embragues is a lazy auto mechanic married to Aurora. However, he spends all of his time drinking, chasing women, and dreaming about forming a union. Don Teodoro, the owner of the repair shop where El Embragues works, confesses that his wife--fed up with his gambling and carousing--is asking for a divorce. El Embragues suggests his *compadre*, fellow mechanic El Regulador, might talk to Teodoro's wife: he did that for Aurora, and she has since stopped criticizing El Embragues for his failures as a husband and father.

What El Embragues doesn't know is that El Regulador is having an affair with Aurora. While El Embragues spends his money on bargirls at a cabaret, El Regulador sneaks out to sleep with Aurora. El Embragues knows El Regulador is having an affair with a married woman, but he doesn't know *he* is the "poor jerk" being cuckolded. El Regulador confesses he's spending his own money to help support the woman and her children (it is even suggested that El Embragues is not the father of the boys).

El Embragues is arrested and sent to prison for shoddy workmanship that caused an auto accident, but his *compadre* visits him and says he'll look after Aurora and the children. He does mention, however, that he won't be able to visit El Embragues on Friday, because he is going to "help" don Teodoro with his wife, just like he is doing for El Embragues!

"Dando y dando" is actually a little *more* amusing than its model "Los compadres": the earlier version was played broader (although most of the situations and even some dialogue are virtually identical) and Flaco Ibáñez is a bit more likeable than Héctor Suárez was in the first film. The scenes in which El Embragues and El Regulador talk about the latter's affair are funny, since the former keeps making comments about how stupid and useless the cuckolded husband (i.e., himself) must be, and El Regulador agrees! Chóforo is fine in his role, as is Polo Ortín, playing it almost straight for a change. Hilda Aguirre has a topless scene or two, while Diana Herrera and Blanca Nieves do topless "exotic" dances in the cabaret scenes.

Both episodes of *Dando y dando* have satisfactory production values, the acting is fine, and the scripts are economical and to the point, with sharp dialogue. I am not sure why the producers decided to make two short films

and combine them into a feature, but this format actually works in this case.



El Agarra todo (Precaución: Paradas continuas) [Grab-It-All (Warning: Frequent Stops)]*

(Prods. Cinetelemex, 1989) *Exec Prod*: Alberto Pedret, Jorge

Rojas Álvarez;

Dir: Jesús

Fragoso; *Scr*: Juan Pérez, Jesús

Fragoso; *Photo*:

Fernando Colín;

Music: Armando

Manzanero;

Music Arr:

Fernando

Ledezma; *Asst*

Dir: José Medina

Hernández; *Film*

Ed: Rogelio

Zúñiga; *Camera*

Op: José Luis

Lemus Sánchez;

Makeup:

Guillermina

Oropeza; *Re-rec*:

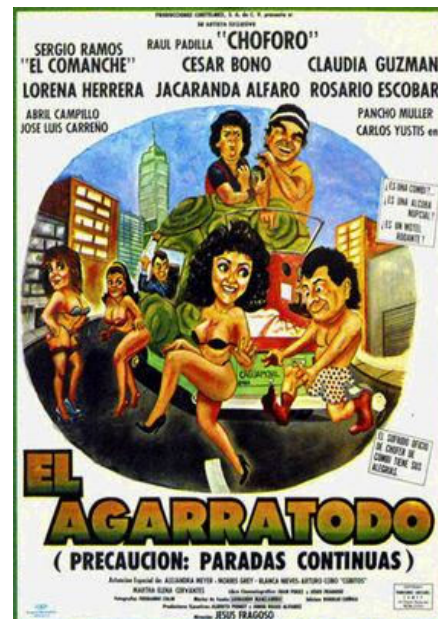
Ricard Saldivar; *Sound*: Samy Ovilla; *Sound Op*: Roberto Muñoz; *Union*: STIC

*some sources, including the film's poster, have the main title as one word (*Agarratodo*) but on-screen it appears to be separated into two words

Cast: Raúl Padilla "Chóforo" (*El Caguamo*), Sergio Ramos "El Comanche" (*compadre*), César Bono (*El Estilos*), Claudia Guzmán (*Licha*), Lorena Herrera (*Licha's friend*), Jacaranda Alfaro (*Licha's friend*), Rosario Escobar (*Rosita*), Abril Campillo (*Licha's friend*), Pancho Muller (*Pancho*), José Luis Carreño, Carlos Yustis (*Caguamo's friend*), Alejandra Meyer (*Carmelita*), Moris Grey (*transvestite hairdresser*), Martha Elena Cervantes (*Yolanda's mother*), Blanca Nieves (*widow*), Arturo Cobos [sic] "Cobitos" (*Rosita's husband*), Nancy Vega, Liliana Castro, Andrea Haro, Alfredo Bustamante "Peluchín" (*Caguamo's friend*), Carlos Canto Reyes, Luis Guevara (*mechanic*), Julio Santos Aguilar (*ejected passenger*), Alfredo Rosas Cedillo

Notes: after years of supporting roles, Raúl Padilla "Chóforo" was elevated to leading-man status in two 1989 *sexy-comedies*, *El Agarra todo* and *Para todas tengo*. Both were produced by Prods. Cinetelemex and have almost identical cast and crew credits, as well as fairly similar plots. Unfortunately, the *sexy-comedy* genre was on its last legs and the scripts for these two movies were rather weak, resulting in several mediocre pictures.

Disjointed and not especially funny, *El Agarra todo* also fails to deliver on one of the basic *sexy-comedy*



attractions: nudity. Claudia Guzman has a brief topless scene, as do Jacaranda Alfaro, Blanca Nieves and one other actress, but Lorena Herrera, Rosario Escobar, and



Abril Campillo stay completely covered up in their “sex” scenes with Chóforo (well, Campillo has a split-second of hard-to-see toplessness). This is a far cry from classic *sexy-comedies* earlier in the decade, which exposed Angélica Chaín, Sasha

Montenegro, Rebeca Silva, the same Rosario Escobar, and other actresses fully and frequently.

El Caguamo drives a *pesero* (a VW bus used for public transit) but spends most of his time hanging out with his friends at his *compadre*’s food stand or having sexual encounters with numerous women. He and El Estilos have a series of wagers on who’s slept with the most women in the past week, etc.



Caguamo sets his sights on attractive hairdresser Licha, but she’s saving herself for her future husband. After a disastrous date in Chapultepec park, Caguamo claims he slept with Licha.

Tipped off by the jealous Estilos, Licha invites Caguamo to her apartment, then humiliates him in front of their friends when he proposes marriage. She says she’ll marry Estilos instead.

Caguamo gets revenge by having affairs with four of Licha’s friends from the beauty salon. Their glowing reviews of his sexual prowess prompt Licha to beg Caguamo for another chance (her marriage to Estilos is boring). They make love, but Caguamo is later forced to



marry his *compadre*’s middle-aged sister Carmelita, who accused him of rape (even though he actually refused her advances).

El Agarra todo is broken into several discrete sections, not especially well-integrated. The first part establishes Caguamo’s womanising ways, then there is the

“courting Licha” section, then the “revenge” section, followed by the odd and disconnected conclusion: after Caguamo sleeps with Licha, there is a cut to a drunken Caguamo and his *compadre* returning to the latter’s house. After his *compadre* passes out, Caguamo is accosted by

Carmelita and flees; Carmelita later concocts her rape story, and then the shotgun-wedding (actually, Caguamo’s *compadre* has what appears to be an M-16 rifle) scene closes the film. Although a disconsolate Licha is at the wedding, the Licha-Caguamo story never reaches closure—however, since she is still married to Estilos, possibly the scripters felt it would have been too much trouble to try to sort things out in the remaining time, so they just threw together the rape-accusation sequence for a “humorous” conclusion.

Sexy-comedies are known for their large casts of (a) comedic performers, and (b) attractive women, and *El Agarra todo* meets these criteria. Unfortunately, of the former category, only Chóforo, Sergio Ramos, and César Bono have any significant footage: Pancho Muller, Carlos Yustis, etc., mostly sit around and trade *albures* (snarky word-play). Claudia Guzmán is perky and attractive, and her four friends—Herrera, Escobar, Alfaro, and Campillo—are sexy but are also under-utilised.



The humour is quite mild, a mix of the aforementioned *albures* with some clumsy physical comedy. Raúl Padilla “Chóforo,” in keeping with the *sexy-comedy* tradition, is an ordinary-looking fellow (e.g., Alfonso Zayas, Rafael Inclán, etc.) who in the context of the film is irresistible to all women, but especially young, sexy females. He’s adequate in the role, but actually seems more comfortable in the “dramatic” sequences than in scenes where he’s supposed to be a smooth-talking Lothario.

The production values are satisfactory; the majority of the film appears to have been shot on location.

El Agarra todo is a bland and not particularly funny late-era *sexy-comedy*, without any special redeeming features to recommend it.

For some curious reason, a number of 1980s Mexican movies were remade in the same decade: *El Agarra todo* was a remake of *Emanuelo (Nacido para pecar)* (1983).

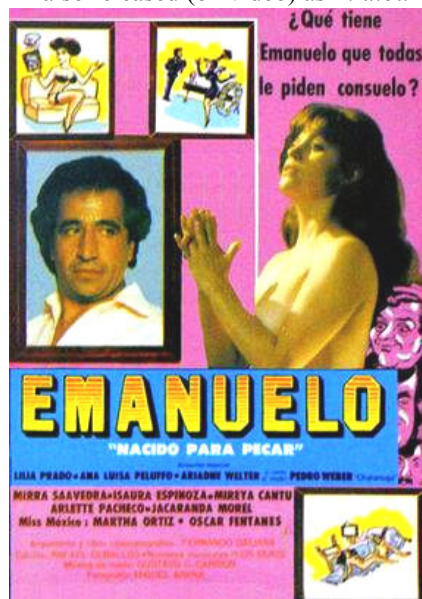


AND THE ORIGINAL VERSION...

Emanuelo (Nacido para pecar)* [Emanuelo, Born to Sin] (Cin. Filmex, 1983) *Prod*: J. Fernando Pérez Gavilán; *Dir*: Sergio Véjar; *Scr*: Fernando Galiana; *Photo*: Miguel Arana; *Music*: Gustavo C. Carreón; *Prod Mgr*: Jesús Frago; *Prod Chief*: Pedro Escobedo; *Asst*

Dir: Javier Carreño; *Film Ed:* Rafael Ceballos; *Decor:* Carlos Grandjean; *Camera Op:* Felipe Mariscal; *Makeup:* Carmen Palomino; *Sound Engin:* Cruz Carrasco; *Union:* STPC

*also released (on video) as *El alburero*



Cast: Rafael Inclán (*Emanuelo*) [on the opening credits this is spelled "Emmanuelo"), Rebeca Silva (*Lucha Ramírez*), Manuel "Flaco" Ibáñez (*Luis*), Guillermo Rivas (*Tiburón*), Lilia Prado (*comadre*), Ariadne Welter (*landlady*), Ana Luisa Peluffo [sic] (*pregnant girl's mother*), Pedro Weber (*Chatanuga*)

(*Apolinar*), Martha Stringel, Mireya Cantú, Jacaranda Morell, Isaura Espinoza (*widow*), Myrra Saavedra (*Rosita*), Arlette Pacheco (*woman on bus*), Martha Ortiz, Moris Grey (*transvestite*), Diana Ferreti (*Emanuelo's customer and neighbor*), Marcelo Villamil (*elderly husband*), Oscar Fentanes (*Luis's friend*), Inés Murillo (*mourner*), Christa von Humboldt (*woman in car*), Los Bukis (*songs on soundtrack only*)

Notes: apparently this film was successful enough that the producers decide to remake it just six years later, as *El Agarratodo* (directed by Jesús Fragoso, the production manager on the first version). *Emanuelo* is a pleasant enough "sexy-comedy," although I would have preferred to see more female skin, and fewer shots of Rafael Inclán's naked butt.

Emanuelo runs an electronics repair shop in Mexico City, but his chief occupation is having sex with nearly every woman he meets (including his landlady, in exchange for the rent). His friends--among them Tiburón and Luis--are impressed and amused by his tales (he even has sex in his van with a widow on the way to her husband's funeral!), but when *Emanuelo* tries to conquer new arrival Lucha, he is rudely rebuffed. Luis bets *Emanuelo* he will be unable to take Lucha's virginity.

Despite his best efforts, *Emanuelo* fails. However, he lies and tells Luis that he succeeded. Lucha convinces Luis--her boyfriend--that *Emanuelo* was lying, so they set a trap for the lothario. Lucha invites *Emanuelo* to her apartment, indicating she is ready to sleep with him. *Emanuelo*, realizing he actually loves Lucha, buys an engagement ring for her. However, when he arrives, she tricks him into stripping and kneeling on her bed in a dark

room; the lights suddenly come on, and all of Lucha's friends (plus Luis) are there, laughing at him. Lucha says she and Luis are getting married.

In revenge, *Emanuelo* sets out to seduce all of Lucha's friends. After each encounter, the women give Lucha a glowing report of his prowess in bed, until Lucha--whose marital relations with Luis aren't very exciting--finally gives in. However, Tiburón's middle-aged wife--and thus *Emanuelo's comadre*--tries to seduce *Emanuelo* but he turns her down (either because she is too old, or out of loyalty to his *compadre*, who has passed out drunk). In a rage, the *comadre* tells her husband that *Emanuelo* forced himself on her. Tiburón, in turn, notifies all of the husbands that *Emanuelo* has cuckolded, and tells the women that *Emanuelo* was just using them. An angry mob shows up at *Emanuelo's* apartment, only to discover he has committed suicide by hanging. They sheepishly depart, and *Emanuelo* (who faked his death) tries to escape, but is caught and turned over to the police. As the film concludes, he's put in a jail cell with a transvestite he had earlier encountered in a movie theatre.

Emanuelo is mildly amusing, with some good lines (the *albur*s referred to in the alternate title). These are a little difficult to translate successfully, but to give one example: *Emanuelo* visits the clothing shop where Lucha works and asks to buy a "pigeon cage." She's puzzled, saying he should go to a pet shop, but he explains he means a brassiere. Later, spying on Lucha with binoculars, *Emanuelo* tells to her to take off her bra and "let the pigeons fly--I have my shotgun here to bring them down."



As noted above, Rafael Inclán is at least not hypocritical, in that he does as much nudity as any woman in the movie. In one sequence, he has to climb down from a third-floor balcony and make his way home, completely nude (although in some long shots his crotch-cover is visible). Rebeca Silva is the only other actress who has significant nude footage, although Ana Luisa Peluffo has a "show nothing" nude scene (covering her breasts with one arm); this is rather frustrating considering the other beautiful actresses *Emanuelo* has (offscreen) sex with, including Arlette Pacheco, Isaura Espinoza, and Myrra

Saavedra. Most of these had done nudity before (or would, later), but not in this movie...

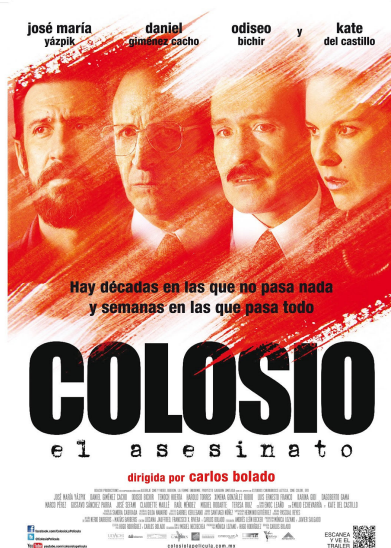
What is missing from *Emanuelo* is the spirit of camaraderie often found in sexy-comedies of the 1980s, a rapport and banter between male actors. The movie tries to include this in the scenes with Inclán, Ibáñez, and Rivas, but they don't share enough footage, and the sense of real friendship is absent.

Mildly amusing but not great.



TWO RECENT FILMS

Colosio, el asesinato [Colosio, the Assassination] (Udachi Productions-Alebrije Cine y Video -Estudios Churubusco Azteca-Oberón



Cinematográfica-La Femme Endormie-Proyecto Guguin, 2012)*
Executive Prod: Mónica Lozano, Javier Salgado;
Prod: Hugo Rodríguez, Mónica Lozano;
Co-Prod: Emilio Maillé, Antonio Chavarrias, Gustavo Angel Olaya; Assoc Prod: Miguel Necoechea; Supv Prod: Grazia Rade; Prod Mgr: Magali Sagarra;

Dir: Carlos Bolado; Scr: Hugo Rodríguez, Carlos Bolado; Scr Collab: Miguel Necoechea; Orig Book: Carlos Puig ("La culebra"); Photo: Andrés León Becker; Music: Pascual Reyes; Asst Dir: Erik Baeza; Film Ed: Carlos Bolado, Luciana Jauffred Gorostiza, Francisco X. Rivera; Prod Des: Sandra Cabriada; Costume Des: Gilda Navarro; Makeup Des: Alfredo Mora; Direct Sound: Santiago Núñez; Sound Des: Nerio Barberis y Matías Barberis

*Mexican-Spanish-French-Colombian co-production

Cast: José María Yazpik (*Andrés Vázquez*), Daniel Giménez Cacho (*El Doctor*), Kate del Castillo (*Verónica*), Odiseo Bichir (*El Licenciado*), Tenoch Huerta (*Jesús*), Harold Torres (*Mario Aburto-Joel-Sánchez Ortiz*), Dagoberto Gama (*Cmdte. Benítez*), Emilio Echevarría (*don Fernando*), Enoc Leño (*Luis Donald Colosio*), Luis Ernesto Franco (*Pedro*), Ximena Gonzalez-Rubio (*Diana Laura, viuda de Colosio*), Karina Gidi (*Bertha*), Marco Pérez (*El Seco* [Juan Antonio Montalbán]), Gustavo Sánchez Parra (*Ortiga*), José Sefami (*José María Torres*), Claudette Maillé (*Clara*), Raúl Méndez (*Palma*), Miguel

Rodarte (*brother of El Licenciado*), Teresa Ruiz (*Alejandro Iglecias*), Emiliano Carrillo (*Andrésito*), Marcela Alvarez (*secretary*), Carlos Aragón (*Tecolote*), Marco Antonio Argueta (*Salomón*), Moises Arizmendi (*Camacho*), Odin Ayala (*Joel's assistant*), Marius Biegai (*Volker*), Diana Carranza (*dancer*), Gabriel Casanova (*Dientes*), Carlos Embry (*Chileno*), Nando Estevane (*Salinas*), Armando Hernández (*Agustín*), Noé Hernández (*Rigo*), Ricardo Kleinbaum (*Verónica's doctor*), Pascacio López (*forensic doctor*), Pedro Mira (*surgeon*), Jorge Mondragón (*producer*), Cesar Ramos (*cantinerio*), Guillermo Ríos (*Domiro*), Claudia Santiago (*Benítez's secretary*), Marco Zetina (*Amado*)

Notes: *Colosio, el asesinato* was the most popular Mexican film of 2012 (ranking #47 overall according to Boxofficemojo.com), but it does not seem likely to "travel" well. Based on the 1994 assassination of presidential candidate Luis Donald Colosio, the movie deals with a subject of considerable interest to Mexican audiences but—while slickly produced—has little to offer non-Mexican viewers.

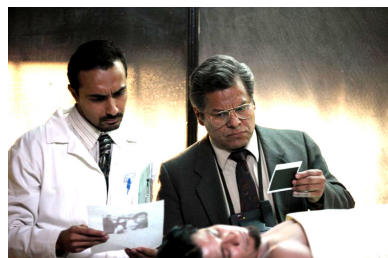
The film supports the theory that Colosio was murdered by elements of the PRI political party (under President Salinas de Gortari) because he showed signs of being too independent: viewers familiar with the case and the personalities involved (some of whom are named, others slightly disguised by pseudonyms) will appreciate the picture but as a stand-alone political thriller it is not exceptional. *Colosio, el asesinato* is well-made, entertaining and fast-paced, but the docu-drama style—ensemble cast, multiple plot-lines and locations, name-dropping—makes it feel rather impersonal.

In March 1994, PRI presidential candidate Luis Donald Colosio is shot to death after a campaign rally in Tijuana. A suspect is



taken into custody. Prosecutor Torres is assigned the case, but "El Doctor" (a thinly-veiled but unnamed version of one of President Salinas de Gortari's principal advisors) orders "El Licenciado" (another pseudonymous version of a real-life personage, José Francisco Ruiz Massieu) to begin a secret, parallel investigation, handing over a suitcase full of cash for expenses. El Licenciado puts CISEN (Centro de Investigación y Seguridad Nacional) agent Andrés Vázquez in charge; Vázquez assembles his team, including Bertha, Jesús, and Pedro. With the aid of sympathetic Tijuana police commander Benítez, Andrés learns the circumstances of Colosio's death do not fit the "lone gunman" theory. In fact, there were at least 3 men—all virtually identical in appearance (and played by the same actor in the movie)—in the crowd around the candidate,

who was shot 3 times. Prosecutor Torres comes up with a similar conclusion, but is blackmailed by El Doctor into making a public report stating only one man—arrested after the assassination—was involved, even though this requires obvious fakery in regards to Colosio's multiple gunshot wounds. Meanwhile, a killer nicknamed El Seco



(actually a member of the Mexican special forces) has been eliminating people connected with the plot. Benítez has his office ransacked and evidence stolen, and is later shot to death.

Andrés delivers his report to El Licenciado. Returning home, he discovers his wife Verónica has been mortally wounded by El Seco, who escapes after killing one of Andrés' men. Andrés is later kidnaped and murdered. El Licenciado tells El Doctor he has proof that the presidential advisor was involved in planning the assassination. He agrees to suppress the report, keeping his information as "insurance"—however, El Licenciado is later assassinated himself. [In real life, José Francisco Ruiz



Massieu was murdered, six months after Colosio's death.]

Colosio, el asesinato is somewhat reminiscent of other fact-based conspiracy films, notably *JFK*. There are lots of scenes of people

looking at diagrams, photos, videos, and documents, as well as clandestine meetings, interviews, and press conferences. This is all generally quite interesting and is paced effectively, but not necessarily dramatically affecting.

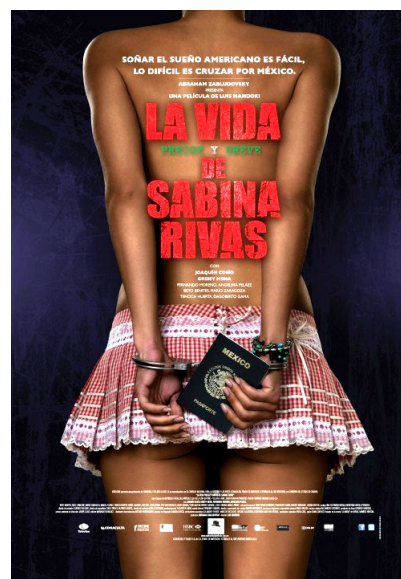
The character of Andrés Vázquez is included to "personalise" the film somewhat: he has a young son from a previous marriage, and is currently in a relationship with radio personality Verónica. At the conclusion, Verónica finally gets a positive result on her pregnancy test, which overjoys her, but she is almost immediately attacked by El Seco (whose trademark is a *coup de grace* shot to the head). Taken to the hospital, she lingers on life-support for a time, dying at the same time as Andrés does. However, because the film isn't *about* Andrés—even as head of the parallel investigation, he doesn't have noticeably more footage than other characters—these scenes feel slightly extraneous. Verónica's death is touching because of the pregnancy connection, but we haven't really gotten to know either Andrés or Verónica as people, despite the brief character-building scenes they share.

The performances are all fine. The major players are Daniel Giménez Cacho, José María Yazpik, Odiseo Bichir, Dagoberto Gama, and Kate del Castillo:



everyone else has more of a "show up, say your lines, then leave" role. The production values are quite good. Carlos Bolado uses a variety of editing/image techniques that help maintain the audience's interest: although docu-dramas tend towards the talky, *Colosio, el asesinato* isn't afflicted by this, moving along at a brisk pace.

Overall, a slick and interesting conspiracy thriller/docu-drama, of special interest to Mexican audiences and those interested in Mexican politics.



La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas [The Short and Precocious Life of Sabina Rivas] (Churchill y Toledo/CONACULTA/FIDECINE/Gob. del Edo. de Chiapas, 2012) *Exec Prod:* Perla Ciuk; *Prod:* Abraham Zabudovsky; *Assoc Prod:* Emilio Azcárraga Jean, Bernardo Gómez, Alejandro Puente, Marcos Fastlicht, Arturo Alcántara, EFD, EFICINE, Televisine, HSBC, Grupo Kasa Automotriz, Tubos y Barras Huecas; *Line Prod:* Gerardo Barrera; *Dir:* Luis Mandoki; *Ser:* Diana Cardozo; *Orig. Novel:* Rafael Ramírez Heredia ("La Mara"); *Photo:* Damián García; *Music:* Alejandro Castaños; *Songs & Music Supv:* Pablo Valero; *Film Ed:* Mariana Rodríguez; *Prod Des:* Antonio Muñozhierro; *Asst Dir:* Javier Clavé; *Makeup & Hair Design:* Carla Tinoco; *Hair Des:* Lourdes Delgado; *Makeup Des:* Alfredo García; *Costume Des:* Adela Cortázar; *Sound Supv & Des:* Martín Hernández; *Direct Sound:* Fernando Cámara; *Union:* STyM (STPC)

Cast: Joaquín Cosío (*Burrona*), Greisy Mena (*Sabina Rivas*), Fernando Moreno (*Jovany*), Angelina Peláez (*doña Lita*), Mario Zaragoza (*Sarabia*), Beto Benites (*Tata Añorve*), Nick Chinlund (*Patrick*), Miguel Flores (*don Nico*), Argél Galindo (*Poisson, leader of Maras*), Tenoch Huerta (*Juan*), Dagoberto Gama (*Gen. Valderrama*), Luis Yee (*Pedro*), Tito Vasconcelos (*emcee at Tijuana club*), José Sefami (*Lic. Cossío*), Asur Zágada (*Thalia*), José Corona (*Lagrimitas*), Tony Dalton (*John*), José Enot (*drunk in Tijuana*), Marco Antonio Argueta, *Tijuana dancers*: Diana Hernández, Francesca Camacho, María Lugo, Britsa López, Synead Magaldi, Indira Morales,



María José Pérez, Aurora Spinola; José Díaz, Zaide Silvia Gutiérrez (*Sabina and Jovany's mother*), Ana Kupfer (*cigarette girl in Tijuana*),

Gengis León (*Mara member*), Moisés Manzano (*father of Sabina and Jovany*), Raúl Morquecho (*skinny guy with glasses*), Adriana Olvera (*secretary*), Julián Pastor (*guest at Cossío's party*), Marco Pérez (*Alipio, narco pilot*), Ricardo Ramos & Gonzalo Solís (*Mara members*), Martín Rojas (*Eros club presenter*), Pierre Suriano (*Marvis*), Tomihuatzi Xelhuantzi (*cab driver*), Marco Antonio Argueta (*man in Eros club*)

Notes: immigration has traditionally been one of the most popular themes in Mexican cinema. Films about Mexicans emigrating to the USA date back to the 1920s, but became particularly prevalent in the 1970s and later. On occasion, individuals from other countries—notably Central America—appear in these movies (in *Tres veces mojado*, 1988, the protagonists are from El Salvador and Guatemala, and are later joined by a Mexican). *La vida*



precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas utilises some familiar immigration-movie tropes, but takes place on the border between Guatemala and Mexico, removing the USA from the equation (although a bad *gringo* does play a prominent role).

Sabina Rivas is a teenager from Honduras who dreams of emigrating to...Mexico? The USA? (It's unclear what her ultimate destination is)

However, she's stuck in the sleazy Tijuana nightclub in the small Guatemalan town of Tecún Umán, just across the river from Mexico. Although owner doña Lita is kind enough, and Sabina is the particular favourite of Mexican

consul don Nico, Sabina is impatient to cross the border. Traveling on a forged passport, she has to pass through the immigration checkpoint manned by Mexican officer Burrona. It's also staffed by *gringos* Patrick and John (presumably they are screening for terrorists). Sabina is brutally raped by Patrick and returned to Tecún Umán. [One might say "she went from Guatemala to Guatepeor, heh]. Burrona acts as her pimp, delivering her to clients on the Mexican side. However, when Sabina refuses to be taken to Patrick again, Burrona savagely beats her.

Meanwhile, young Jovany has joined the violent Mara Salvatrucha gang that abuses (even murders) and robs those attempting to cross the border. When Jovany wanders into the Tijuana one night, he recognises Sabina (who is at the moment singing, topless) but she has him ejected from the club. Later, Jovany sneaks into Sabina's room: they are old acquaintances from the same village in Honduras. She refuses his offer of "protection," insisting she's going her own way in life.

Burrona and fellow border guard Sarabia work for the corrupt General Valderrama, who hires the Mara gang members to help smuggle drugs. Burrona loses his nerve and is executed by the Maras on Valderrama's orders.

Sabina leaves the Tijuana and moves into a shanty town run by Tata Añorves, a

decent, religious older man who is the unofficial leader of a group of would-be immigrants. The Guatemalan military orders the immigrants to move out. Before they can do so, however, the villagers are attacked and massacred by the Maras. Jovany is killed by one of the immigrants, a man he'd earlier robbed and mutilated. Sabina sees his body. In flashback, it is revealed that Sabina and Jovany are brother and sister. Their drunken, abusive father discovered their incestuous relationship: Jovany kills the older man in self-defense, then accidentally stabs their mother to death, before setting their hut on fire.

As the film concludes, Sabina returns to the Tijuana.

La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas depicts undocumented immigration as a difficult, even deadly matter. Potential immigrants are arrested and beaten (by the authorities), and/or robbed and murdered (by gangs) even before they reach the border. Stranded on the border between two countries (in many cases, neither of these countries is their own), they live precariously, hoping for the chance for a better life.

One topic not touched on in *La vida precoz...* is the impetus for immigration. Previous films have given various reasons, ranging from very personal (for instance, fleeing after killing someone) to political (escaping civil



war) to socio-economic (leaving a land stricken by drought or unemployment, etc.). At the very end of the movie, it's clear Sabina and Jovany left Honduras after the violent deaths of their parents, but there is no indication they were pursued by the authorities, or hounded by their neighbours and thus had to leave. In one scene, the Maras stop a group of immigrants and Jovany is recognised by a young man from his hometown, which indicates a general exodus is occurring, and that Jovany and Sabina weren't alone in leaving. Earlier, Sabina simply says she wants a better life, dreaming of a career as a professional singer.

The many other immigrants shown in *La vida precoz...* are not really given much characterisation, so their reasons for leaving their homes are equally mysterious (although a desire for a "better life" is assumed). The lack of specific motivation makes it a bit harder to empathise with these people: they are risking their lives for a chance at a vaguely-defined future, which implies their lives were insufferable before, but...we aren't shown this (or even told about it).

La vida precoz... is rather densely-packed with characters and incidents. This has benefits and drawbacks. On the positive side, the film is richly detailed and filled with interesting aspects: the *milieu* of the Tijuana, the Maras, life on the border for the residents and the transients, the corrupt authorities, and so on. Although the film is named after Sabina, attention is paid to Jovany, Burrona, doña Lita, and Tata Añorve, as well as lesser



characters.

But the plethora of sub-plots does tend to deflect attention from Sabina's story. Although the narrative is linear, it's not focused solely on Sabina, and there's a fair amount of back-and-forth across the border, which confuses the central issue to some extent. It's understood that she wants to make the final leap and get away from the border area entirely (as opposed to crossing into Mexico briefly, to work as a prostitute), but the narrative clarity is muddled.

Regardless, *La vida precoz...* is a very good film, with excellent performances, and a superb *mise-en-scene* (the film was shot both in Chiapas and in Guatemala). There are a number of memorable sequences. One of the nicest is a brief scene in which Sabina sees some other teens in a video arcade playing a game similar to Dance Dance Revolution: she inserts some coins in the machine and—for a moment—loses herself in the game, becoming a

"normal" teenager with no worries or responsibilities. This is bittersweet and touching.

The performances are top-notch. Greisy (it doesn't look great in English, but it's pronounced "Gracie") Mena and Fernando Moreno are Venezuelans playing Hondurans in a Mexican film: presumably director Mandoki wanted relative unknowns whose accents weren't obviously Mexican, but the choice of Mena in particular was a good one (Moreno is fine but he has much less screen time and less characterisation than Mena). She plays Sabina Rivas with a combination of innocence and cynicism. Joaquín Cosío has been in films for more than a decade, but leaped to fame in *El Infierno* (2010): Burrona is alternately villainous and sympathetic. Beto Benites and Angelina Peláez (who won an Ariel for her role) also stand out as the kindly Tata and the basically-decent madame doña Lita. The smaller roles are also filled with effective performers.

Interestingly enough, *La vida precoz...* and *Colosio, el asesinato*, the two most recent Mexican films I've seen, share a number of actors: Tenoch Huerta, Dagoberto Gama, José Sefami, and Marco Antonio Argueta. Also of trivia interest: actor/director Julián Pastor has a cameo role as a party guest.

Luis Mandoki began his career in Mexico, but "went international" from the late '80s to the early 2000s, directing films like *White Palace*, *Born Yesterday* (the remake), and *Trapped*. He returned to Mexican cinema with *Voce inocentes* (2004) but appears to be willing to make either English or Spanish-language films, depending on the project. Mandoki was nominated for a Best Director Ariel for *La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas* (losing to Rodrigo Plá)—the film did take home three prizes (Best Supporting Actress, Best Special Effects, and Best Art Direction), in addition to nominations in seven other categories. The film was fairly popular in Mexico, earning about \$2.4 million in just under two months at the end of 2012.

La vida precoz y breve de Sabina Rivas is extremely well-made and certainly worth watching.



SOME OLDER FILMS

Juan Charrasqueado [Scarface Juan] (Filmadora Chapultepec, 1947), *Prod*: Pedro Galindo; *Dir*: Ernesto Cortázar; *Scr*: Ignacio Villareal, Ramón Pérez; *Adapt-Dialog*: Ramón Pérez; *Story*: Ernesto Cortázar; *Photo*: Víctor Herrera; *Music*: Gonzalo Curiel; *Songs*: Víctor Cordero (1), Pedro Galindo (3); *Prod Mgr*: Jesús Galindo; *Prod Chief*: Julio Guerrero T.; *Asst Dir*: Ignacio Villareal; *Film Ed*: José Marino; *Art Dir*: Francisco Marco Chilet; *Camera Op*: Luis Medina; *Makeup*: Sara Mateos; *Recording*: James Fields, Rafael Peón; *Re-rec*: Galdino Samperio; *Credits Artwork*: José G. Cruz

Cast: Pedro Armendáriz (*Juan Robledo*), Miroslava (*Maria*), Fernando Soto "Mantequilla" (*El Trece*), Arturo Martínez (*Luis Coronado*), Luis Aceves C. (*Sota*),

Fernando Casanova (*Felipe*), Ángel Merino (*Fernando*), Carlos Múzquiz (*Malilla*), Georgina Barragán (*Charrita*), Silvia Rey, Los Tres Vaqueros, El Mariachi Vargas, La



Torcacita, Paco Martínez (*doctor*), Francisco Pando (*Pepe, cantinero*), Agustín Fernández (*Agustín, man in cantina*), Luis Pérez Maza, Emilio Garibay (*card cheat*), Jaime Fernández (*man at cockfight*), Guillermo Bravo Sosa (*cantinero*)

Notes: this is a fairly good dramatic *ranchera* based on a *corrido* by Victor Cordero. However, the most outstanding aspects of the movie are the direction, design and photography, which are quite unusual, even somewhat "arty." One outstanding sequence at a cockfight is shot with strong, off-screen light sources so that large moving shadows are cast over the spectators, and one cockfight is only shown via the battling shadows of the two birds. Although some of the interiors have standard, glossy cinema photography, others are shot in a very harsh lighting scheme.

Juan Robledo is a carefree, womanizing gambler, who works as a horse trainer until he earns enough money to live on, then quits and enjoys himself until his bankroll is gone. He returns to his home town and learns his sweetheart María is engaged--against her will--to Luis



Coronado. María's family feels Juan is their social inferior. After María's brother Felipe picks a fight in a *cantina* with Juan and is slightly wounded, María runs away with her lover. Her brothers visit Juan's house to kill

him, but María prevents a showdown by knocking out Juan and shielding his body with her own.

Luis and María's brothers conspire with crooked gamblers Sota and Malilla--who had lost a large sum of money to Juan--and Juan is lured into a trap in the *cantina*. He's badly beaten by some hired thugs. María's brothers tell her Juan is dead and forcibly take her back to their *hacienda*, leaving a forged note claiming she has changed her mind about marrying Juan.

Juan, a large scar on his face as a result of the beating, searches for Sota and Malilla, who have left town. He finally tracks them down--Malilla, who was opposed to the scheme in the first place, is allowed to depart, but Juan shoots and kills Sota when the latter says he had Juan's face marked out of jealousy (Sota's girlfriend, Charrita, had a crush on Juan).

Returning to town, Juan learns María has given birth to his son and is now living on his ranch. But before he can go to her, he is ambushed by Luis and some henchmen and mortally wounded.

Juan Charrasqueado's plot is rather familiar (particularly to those who knew the titular *corrido*!) but it is elaborated in a satisfactory fashion. Pedro Armendáriz starts off as a gregarious, cheerful fellow but the loss of María and his scarred face (in two difference scenes he



smashes a mirror in disgust at his own image) turn him into a taciturn, brooding avenger. Miroslava is attractive as María, and Fernando Soto is unusually subdued as Juan's sidekick (the movie is told in flashback, as a morose El Trece listens to the *corrido* of Juan Charrasqueado in a *cantina*).

It may seem curious that one of the main villains--Luis Coronado--is not punished during the course of the picture (although Juan shoots several henchmen, Luis is apparently not killed in the final shootout), but he gets his comeuppance in the sequel, *En la hacienda de la flor* (1948). In that film, Luis (again played by Arturo Martínez) faces Juan's grown son (Pedro Armendáriz again).

The production values of *Juan Charrasqueado* are excellent. There is a nice mix of real exteriors (including a

substantial town set) and studio interiors. And, as mentioned above, the art direction and photography are very good. The songs are also pleasant and viewers actually get a chance to hear Pedro Armendáriz "sing" after a fashion (Juan is drunken and bellows along with a *cantina* singer, so he isn't supposed to be good).

In addition to the aforementioned sequel, the character of Juan Charrasqueado appeared in a number of later movies, including *Yo maté a Juan Charrasqueado* (1948--with Tito Junco as Juan, a bad guy this time), *Los cuatro Juanes* (1964, Juan played by Narciso Busquets), *Los amores de Juan Charrasqueado* (1967, with David Reynoso in the role--curiously, the poster art for this film was the same as the 1947 version, with David Reynoso's face superimposed over that of Pedro Armendáriz!), and *Juan Charrasqueado--Gabino Barrera* (1980, featuring Vicente Fernández as Juan).

Overall, a solid film.



Terremoto en Guatemala (Al final de la esperanza) [Earthquake in Guatemala: To the End of Hope] (Cin. Tikal, 1976) *Dir-Scr*: Rafael Lanuza; *Photo*: Carlos Lanuza; *Music*: Ernesto Cortázar [Jr.]; *Film Ed*: Jorge Rivera; *Sound*: Salvador Topete
Cast: Norma Lazareno (*Rubí de los Ángeles Altamirano*), Leonardo Morán (*Juan Carlos del Campo*), Guillermo Andreu (*doctor*), Augusto Monterroso (*old man*), Octavio Paiz (*young man*), Carolina Lanuza (*nurse*)

Notes: this film went into production about 6 months after the devastating earthquake of February 1976 in Guatemala, but it also contains a significant amount of documentary footage shot immediately after the event. Guatemalan filmmaker Rafael Lanuza first became associated with the Mexican film industry in the early 1970s, and while *Terremoto en Guatemala* has no credited Mexican producer, it is generally accepted as a Mexican-Guatemalan co-production. As with most of Lanuza's pictures, sound and post-production work was done in Mexico.

Emilio García Riera notes that this film's "first run" in Mexico City was limited to one day in 1978, although it certainly must have received playdates elsewhere in the country over the years. García Riera also cites a running time of 110 minutes--based on a Mexican video version--but the Cine Real tape I have runs only 91 minutes and does not seem cut (in fact, the middle section even feels padded).

Newlyweds Juan Carlos and Rubí check in to a Guatemala City hotel for their honeymoon. However, at 3am the next morning, a severe earthquake hits the country, and they are trapped in the ruins. Rubí's legs are severely injured by the debris. Juan Carlos eventually digs his way out. He



convinces a doctor, nurse, and another young man to return to the hotel with him, but the tunnel Juan Carlos created is too narrow for the doctor to enter. Promising to send back help, the doctor gives Juan Carlos some water and pain pills for Rubí, then departs. After a while, Juan Carlos gets tired of waiting, enlarges his escape tunnel, and tries to pull Rubí out on a board. However, an aftershock provokes a partial cave-in, and Rubí--ever weaker--urges her husband to leave her. Outside, the doctor (whose own family died in the quake) is busy helping injured people, but the nurse and the other young man return to the hotel. They find the tunnel filled with rubble and start working to clear it. Rubí dies. Juan Carlos gets a piece of glass and cuts his wrists then lies down next to her to die.

The middle portion of *Terremoto en Guatemala*--between Juan Carlos emerging from the rubble for the first time and his encounter with the doctor--consists of real and recreated footage of the earthquake and its aftermath. Aside from fictional scenes of the actual earthquake--i.e., people in their houses being terrified, trapped, and crushed by falling walls, roofs, furniture, etc.--the footage is mostly people standing around devastated buildings, aid workers helping the injured, etc.



It's difficult in some cases to distinguish between the real footage and the recreations, but clearly many of the shots are documentary in nature (including corpses being placed in a mass grave and then covered over by a bulldozer). A radio report about the disaster is heard originally, then a narrator takes over. The narration is rather odd at times, discussing "balls of fire" seen in the

sky before an earthquake in 1916 and again in 1976, then concluding with a long peroration about the assistance provided by other counties ("thank you, noble brothers"). As García Riera notes, the music in these scenes ranges from a martial march to rather jaunty and inappropriate marimba music.

Terremoto en Guatemala is a fairly well-made movie. The scenes of the earthquake are low-budget but effective (wisely limited to interior shots made on sets), and the scenes of Juan Carlos and Rubí trapped in the rubble are believably claustrophobic, if (of necessity) too well-lit. Rubí's leg injuries are horrific to behold--it's almost laughable when Juan Carlos tells her "it's a bad wound but [the leg] isn't broken," since it looks like one of her legs is almost severed! Juan Carlos, Rubí, and the earthquake victims in the other fictional scenes are realistically bloody, dusty, terrified, and in pain. The acting is satisfactory, albeit traditionally melodramatic (Lazareno, Morán, Monterroso) or blandly post-dubbed (everyone else). One sore point is Ernesto Cortázar Jr.'s score, consisting of his overly-familiar canned themes: the first third of the picture is horribly over-scored, with non-stop music on the soundtrack, but this fortunately stops and there are even some blessed moments of silence later on.



TWO "CHATO" ORTÍN MOVIES



La honradez es un estorbo [Honesty is a Hindrance] (Films Lux, 1937) *Prod:* Adán Zepeda Navarro; *Dir:* Juan Bustillo Oro; *Adapt:* Juan Bustillo Oro, Antonio Helú; *Orig. Play:* Juan Bustillo Oro; *Photo:* Víctor Herrera; *Music:* Max Urban; *Prod Chief:* Ricardo Beltri; *Asst Dir:* Carlos Cabello; *Film Ed:* Juan Bustillo Oro; *Art Dir:* Jorge Fernández; *Sound:* José B. Carles

Cast: Leopoldo Ortín (*Carlos Larín*), Gloria Morel (*Elena*), Luis G. Barreiro (*Julián Molina*), Sarah[sic] García (*doña Refugio*), Manuel Noriega (*Pepe Alcántara*), Alberto Martí (*editor of "El Imparcial"*), Adela Jaloma (*Raquel*), Joaquín Coss (*don Vito*), José E. Pérez (*Secundino*), Galdino Samperio (*Rogaciano, office boy*), Miguel Wimer (*Lic. Torres*), Carlos L. Cabello

(*employee*), Crox Alvarado (*man at party*), ? Paco Martínez (*man at party*), Consuelo Segarra (*secretary at PCO*), Humberto Rodríguez (*president of PCO*), David Valle González (*man in "NO" montage*)

Notes: Leopoldo "Chato" Ortín was one of the first star comedians of Mexican cinema. After appearing in supporting roles in a number of movies, Ortín was elevated to leading comic roles with *La honradez es un estorbo* (although he continued to be used as comic relief in other pictures). His last year as a major performer was 1940 (in which he starred in 5 feature films): ill-health limited him to a handful of movies for the rest of his life (he died in 1953). The Peruvian-born Ortín was married to actress Aurora Campuzano; their son became famous as comic actor Polo Ortín (and his son Jorge Ortín also became an actor).

La honradez es un estorbo is actually not a comedy, although it has a few comic elements. For the most part, it's a melodrama somewhat similar to the later *telenovela*-and-movie *Gutierritos*: a decent, humble man is brow-beaten and denigrated by his family (in this case, his mother-in-law and brother-in-law, although his wife is supportive). In both instances, the protagonist is an aspiring writer.

Carlos Larín and his wife Elena live with her mother doña Refugio and Elena's brother Julián, who works in the same office as Carlos. Although Carlos helps support her, doña Refugio constantly belittles her son-in-law, particularly after a costume party in which he appears as "Charlot" (Charlie Chaplin), a role she feels is undignified. Julián schemes to obtain the position of secretary to Lic. Torres, a promotion which should go to Carlos. Carlos



believes "honesty and ability" should be the only two qualities by which a man's work should be judged, but Julián introduces Torres to his girlfriend Raquel (she later becomes his mistress) and is made company secretary. Julián later coerces the employees to "donate" money to the political campaign of Torres: only Carlos refuses. When he later reads that the Partido Civilista de la Oposición opposes Torres' candidacy, Carlos joins the group and is elected their new leader. However, this results in his dismissal from his job.

Julián progresses in politics himself, but Carlos is unable to find work. The newspaper "El Imparcial" publishes one of his stories, but he's paid nothing. He finally takes a demeaning job as a Chaplin imitator, strolling the streets carrying a sign advertising a shoe store. Julián and doña Refugio are scandalised by this, and encourage Elena to divorce her husband. Instead, she

stands by his side and they depart. As they go, Carlos receives a letter from "El Imparcial" stating his story was a success and he is being offered a paid position with the newspaper.

Although Ortín did not resemble physically Chaplin's Little Tramp in the slightest, once suitably made-up and costumed he manages to be reasonably diverting. The "costume party" sequence occupies the first dozen minutes of the film, and as noted, Ortín returns to his impersonation at the conclusion. In the opening section, most of the party



guests find him hilarious--he does a few comic bits--and it's here he meets the owner of the shoe store who will later give him a job. The second "Chaplin" sequence is played for drama, with various people on the street remarking about how demeaning the job must be, which only reinforces the shame Carlos feels at being a "clown." However, he gamely continues the masquerade, although he doesn't tell his wife what sort of work he's doing.

The only other truly "comic" bits in the film are, first, a meeting of the employees' club in which Carlos is wildly cheered by the members each time he begins to speak--this is all a cruel jest concocted by Julián. The second sequence played for laughs occurs when Carlos arrives at the offices of the Partido Civilista de la Oposición (PCO); he's given directions to the "museum of mummies," and when he says "no, I want the PCO office," he's told "it's the same thing" (referring to the elderly members of the party). Carlos is warmly welcomed into the organisation (the secretary has to hunt to find the membership book, it's been so long since anyone joined the group!) and



eventually elevated to its leadership (this sub-plot goes nowhere, however). There are a number of witty lines throughout the rest of the movie. Doña Refugio says Carlos is suffering from "acute imbecilitis"; later, when Carlos is looking for work, a potential employer opens his office door, takes one look

at Carlos, and says "Forget it: we're looking for an intelligent man and you have the face of a fool!" (then he slams the door)

at Carlos, and says "Forget it: we're looking for an intelligent man and you have the face of a fool!" (then he slams the door)

[Bustillo Oro later admitted Ortín wasn't given enough comic material to work with, and this hurt the film's reception with audiences.]

Most of *La honradez es un estorbo* is, however, filled with unpleasant dialogue as Julián and doña Refugio pour out their bile on Carlos. Carlos doesn't take it meekly, but he has to moderate his responses for his wife's sake. One somewhat artificial plot contrivance is that--before they wed--Carlos "promised" Elena that they would live with her widowed mother, and now Elena refuses to even consider having a separate household (until the very end of the movie). And this even though doña Refugio and Julián openly and repeatedly express their hostility and contempt for Carlos, right in front of Elena! (They also encourage her to divorce him after he loses his job) Carlos punches Julián right before the final fade-out, but it's not very satisfying or cathartic.

The screen story for the film came from an unproduced play written by Juan Bustillo Oro in 1930; while the script's references to politics seem very tame today, apparently the censor in 1937 felt otherwise, and fined Bustillo Oro for exhibiting a version that hadn't been cleared.

La honradez es un estorbo seems to have been produced on a decent budget, with a variety of sets and some exterior footage. Bustillo Oro includes a few minor directorial touches, including a brief but effective montage: Carlos, in giant close-up, looks directly at the



camera and asks for a job; this shot is followed by a succession of extreme close-ups of people saying "No!" and then an optical-effects shot of a group of over-lapping faces, shouting "No!" in unison.

The performances are all quite good. Ortín and Morel are fairly naturalistic in their roles, while Sara García looks uncharacteristically thin in this movie, but is a very



satisfactory, horrible mother-in-law. Luis G. Barreiro, usually cast in fairly genial roles, is impressive as the scheming Julián: in one scene, he practically forces his girlfriend Raquel to drive off alone with Lic. Torres, who has promised him a promotion. As the car drives off, Torres gropes Raquel, and a slight pang of regret can be inferred from the expression on Julián's face; but he shrugs it off, and goes

on his way. The supporting and minor roles are also aptly filled. One name of interest is Galdino Samperio, who plays office boy Rogaciano—he would later move behind the cameras as a long-time sound technician in Mexican cinema.

La honradez es un estorbo came to my attention thanks to a still in García Riera's *Historia documental del cine mexicano* showing Ortín made up as Charlie Chaplin: although, as it developed, this is a melodrama rather than a comedy, it's still a fairly slick and entertaining film.



El muerto murió [The Dead Man Died] (Iracheta



y Elvira, 1939) Dir: Alejandro Galindo; Co-Dir: Marco Aurelio Galindo; Scr/Adapt: Marco Aurelio Galindo, Alejandro Galindo; Orig. Play: Felipe Ramos; Photo: Agustín Martínez Solares; Prod Chief: Luis Sánchez

Tello; Asst Dir: Roberto Gavaldá [sic]; Film Ed: Emilio Gómez Muriel; Art Dir: Manuel Fontanals; Sound: Ing. José Rodríguez; Script Clerk: Jorge López Portillo

Cast: Leopoldo Ortín (*Hilarión del Puente*), Adriana Lamar (*Carmen del Puente*), Carlos López Moctezuma (*Roberto Farfán*), Gloria Marín (*Elena Farfán*), Matilde Corell (*Matilde*), Eduardo Martínez Vara (*Enrique del Mar*), Maritza (*Lola, maid*), Armando Arriola (*Lic. Manuel Vela*), Rafael Icardo (*Estanislao Llorantes--photo only*), Raúl Guerrero "Chaplin" (*cab driver*), Victor Junco (*hotel clerk*)

Notes: one of a seemingly endless number of film adaptations of stage farces, *El muerto murió* is tolerable entertainment but shows its stage origins almost every minute. Alejandro Galindo (and his brother, Marco Aurelio, credited as "co-director") do "open up" the story somewhat, but the majority of the movie consists of dialogue scenes in which various characters "enter/exit, stage right."

Hilarión not unreasonably complains to his wife Carmen about the large portrait of her late first husband, Estanislao Llorantes, that dominates their bedroom. Carmen (unreasonably) wails and cries when he has it

moved and hung over the mantle in the living room of their apartment (which would seem to be a decent compromise). Unknown to them both, Estanislao had a second wife, Elena, in Guadalajara; she owns a similar portrait, and has also remarried, to Roberto.

In a series of coincidences which would only exist in a farce like this, Elena and Roberto move to Mexico City, and rent the apartment right next to Hilarión and Carmen. Matilde, Carmen's



housekeeper, leaves their employ due to the brouhaha over the portrait (she is still devoted to don Estanislao's memory), and is hired by Elena. Meanwhile, Hilarión's friend Enrique arrives in the capital as well: he is in love with Elena (although she discourages his attentions).

Within a short period of time, the following

misunderstandings occur: Hilarión thinks Carmen is having an affair with Roberto; after Enrique says he's in love with the widow of Estanislao Llorantes (meaning Elena), Hilarión thinks Carmen is also having an affair with Enrique; Carmen



thinks Hilarión is having an affair with Elena; the portrait of Estanislao in Roberto's apartment is damaged and—after repair—is mistakenly returned to Hilarión's apartment (then removed); Enrique suffers a gastric attack (from eating "American food" while traveling) and Hilarión accidentally gives him powdered soap instead of bicarbonate of soda, causing him to foam at the mouth and appear insane; and so on and so forth.

Eventually, everything is explained, no one had an



affair with anyone (although Estanislao was a bigamist), Enrique runs away screaming, and the portraits of Estanislao are tossed out a window into the gutter.

As mentioned

above, the Galindos add a few cinematic touches to the stagey narrative. The "portrait" of Estanislao Llorantes changes as it "reacts" to comments by the various characters (looking shocked, angry, pleased, etc.). This is

a traditional comic device in films, but wouldn't have been really feasible in a play. More interesting is the film's use of back projection in the windows of certain sets, presumably to provide a more realistic illusion of the outside world (as opposed to painted backdrops, for instance). This seems like a lot of trouble for minimal



effect, but one has to give Alejandro Galindo credit for putting in the effort. One of these scenes also features two

characters playing ping pong as Hilarión talks to them: they don't stop (and don't miss the ball) as the conversation continues, a nice touch.

A bizarre and un-politically correct (to today's viewer) scene features Hilarión accusing Carmen of infidelity, then removing his belt and (off-screen) beating her with it! (Her screams of pain are heard, briefly) Carmen apparently doesn't take this personally (even though she was falsely accused), since in her next scene with Hilarión (as they



prepare to visit Roberto and Elena for dinner, which is quite odd since they each believe the other is having an affair with the respective member of the other couple) she is coldly formal to him, but not outraged or overtly hostile.

El muerto murió is neither better nor worse

than most such bedroom farces. The outrageous coincidences have to be accepted as part of the rules, as does the fact that no one ever lets another person *explain* something, since—in most cases—a simple explanation would sort out the confusion and end the story immediately. On the other hand, the film isn't very amusing, and none of the characters are particularly sympathetic. Leopoldo Ortín has little or no comic business, playing a role which mostly requires him to act exasperated; Adriana Lamar over-acts and her character is shrewish; Carlos López Moctezuma is mousy and ineffectual, but only mildly; Gloria Marín has little to do.



Eduardo Martínez Vera, as Enrique del Mar, is at least enthusiastic and lively: I have little information about this actor, whose film career was very brief.

Trivia note: Carlos López Moctezuma and Gloria Marín, who play man-and-wife here, were reunited by Alejandro and Marco Aurelio Galindo in *El rápido de las 9.15* (1941), playing a gangster and his reluctant girlfriend.



El muerto murió is not without some interest, but it is a minor film, both in the greater scheme of things and even in Alejandro Galindo's body of work.



THE MEXICAN FILM BULLETIN

is published 6 times a year by David Wilt, 6803 Dartmouth Ave, College Park MD 20740 USA.

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