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Annual Halloween Issue Reviews!



Morayta's Masterpieces



El vampiro sangriento [The Bloody Vampire] (Internacional Sono Film/Tele Talía Films, 1961) *Prod:* Rafael Pérez Grovas; *Dir-Scr:* Miguel Morayta; *Photo:* Raúl Martínez Solares; *Music:* Luis Hernández Bretón; *Prod Mgr:* Raúl H. Arjona M.; *Prod Chief:* Enrique Morfin; *Asst Dir:* Américo Fernández; *Film Ed:* Gloria Schoemann; *Art Dir:* Manuel Fontanals; *Decor:* Carlos Arjona; *Camera Op:* Cirilo Rodríguez; *Lighting:* Miguel Arana; *Makeup:* Armando Meyer; *Sound Supv:* James L. Fields; *Dialog Rec:* J. González Gancy; *Re-rec:* Galdino Samperio; *Sound Ed:* José Li-Ho; *SpFX:* Juan Muñoz Ravelo; *Union:* STPC

Cast: Begoña Palacios (*Inés*), Erna Martha Bauman (*Countess Eugenia Frankenhause*), Raúl Farell (*Dr. Ricardo Pizarro*), Bertha Moss (*Frau Hildegarda*), Carlos Agosti (*Count Sigfrido von Frankenhause*), Francisco A. Córdova (*Gestas*), Antonio Raxel (*Count Cagliostro*), Enrique Lucero (*Lázaro, butler*), Lupe Carriles (*Lupe*), N. León "*Frankenstein*" (*torturer*), Mario Cid (*Cagliostro disciple*)

La invasión de los vampiros [The Invasion of the Vampires] (Internacional Sono Film/Tele Talía Films, 1961) [Technical credits same as *El vampiro sangriento*]

Cast: Erna Martha Bauman (*Brunhilda; Countess Eugenia Frankenhause*), Rafael del Río (*Dr. Ulises Albarrán*), Tito Junco (*don Gonzalo Guzmán de la Selva*), Fernando Soto "*Mantequilla*" (*Crescencio*), Bertha Moss (*Frau Hildegarda*), Carlos Agosti (*Count Frankenhause*), Enrique Lucero (*Lázaro, butler*), David Reynoso (*Máximo*), Enrique García Álvarez (*Padre Víctor*), José Chávez [Trowe] (*villager*), Armando Gutiérrez (*Efrén López*), Victorio Blanco & Leonor Gómez (*villagers*), Mario Cid (*Paulino*), Ignacio Peón (*mourner*)

Notes: Miguel Morayta Martínez was born in Spain in 1907. A military officer with conflicting loyalties—he was distantly related to Francisco Franco but fought on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War—Morayta left his native land after the conflict and eventually emigrated to Mexico. Having had some previous experience in film publicity, Morayta found work in the Mexican film industry as a scripter and director. While he directed films written by others and wrote films directed by others, the majority of Morayta's movies bore his name as both director and writer.



only other foray into the genre was the comedic *Capulina*



Morayta had previously made several fantasy comedies, but the "Count Frankenhause" series—*El vampiro sangriento* and *La invasión de los vampiros*—was his first and almost only venture into outright horror (he later helmed *Doctor Satán* in 1966, a mixture of fantasy and James Bondian-type intrigue, but not a true horror film). Morayta's

contra los monstruos. Miguel Morayta retired from filmmaking in the late 1970s but lived until 2013 in



retirement in Mexico City.

Although *El vampiro sangriento* and *La invasión de los vampiros* are separate films—released about a year apart—with somewhat different casts, they were filmed

back-to-back at the Estudios Churubusco (from December



1961 through the third week of January 1962) and are closely linked narratively. These essentially constitute one, long, epic film, written and directed by Miguel Morayta. Topics mentioned in the first

film aren't relevant until the second film, and the second film is somewhat incomprehensible if one hasn't seen the preceding picture.

Multi-film series (as opposed to sequels produced at a later time than the original movie) had existed in Mexican



cinema since the 1940s. While the establishment of the América studios in 1957 resulted in the production of a number of series (such as the Nostradamus films), back-to-back

production of related films also occurred at other facilities. The first two “Sombra Vengadora” and the 3 original “Aztec Mummy” movies are notable genre examples.



While the “Count Frankenhause” films are thus not unique in format, they are probably the most personal, stylistically consistent and highest in overall quality of the

numerous fantasy series produced in Mexico.

El vampiro sangriento was dubbed into English as *The Bloody Vampire* and *La invasión de los vampiros* became *Invasion of the Vampires*. K. Gordon Murray purportedly released both of these theatrically before selling them to television, where they had long lives. Although Murray

and his dubbing crew as usual made very few changes to the original films—even more or less faithfully translating the dialogue into English—the title card artwork for both U.S. versions was altered. *El vampiro sangriento* depicts a version of the Frankenhause coat of arms (a skull and a bat), but *The Bloody Vampire* title art erases the Gothic “F” on the skull’s forehead. *Invasion of the Vampires* removes the image of the negligee-clad Erna Martha Baumann (borrowed from the key art on the Mexican film’s poster) from *La invasión de los vampiros*’ title artwork and leaves just the big bat silhouette and a graveyard background from the original.

El vampiro sangriento: at midnight, a spectral coach glides silently across the countryside. Meanwhile,

Ricardo, Gestas, and Inés approach the body of a hanged man, searching for the rare mandragora plant which sprouts beneath his feet.

The coach pauses

briefly: its sinister-looking passenger stares at the mandragora, then urges his driver to proceed, since they must arrive at their destination before the full moon rises! When the coach is gone, Ricardo and the others uproot the mandragora and take it to famous alchemist Count Cagliostro: “the roots of the plant may be made into hallucinatory drugs, love potions, hate potions, and other things. My family is the only one which knows of the existence of this species and its uses.” Ricardo is engaged to Inés, the Count’s daughter, while Gestas is a long-time family retainer. For centuries, the Cagliostro family has been using occult science to battle evil.

[The legend that the mandragora sprouts a



gallows dates back to the Middle Ages. Hanns Heinz Ewers utilised this as the basis for his 1911 novel *Alraune*, adapted to the screen multiple times. The best-known

internationally is probably *Alraune*, made in Germany in 1952 and starring Erich von Stroheim and Hildegard Knef. An English-dubbed version (*The Unnatural*) was released in the USA in 1958 and the picture may very well have been shown in Mexico as well, possibly inspiring Morayta. Curiously, Cagliostro tells Inés and the others the mandragora root they brought cannot be used for the creation of “ácido górico”[some sources cite this as “ácido bórico,” but boric acid is an actual substance that kills roaches, not vampires]. That acid—whose significance isn’t explained



until later--can only be produced from a different type of mandragora. Which makes the whole opening sequence sort of pointless—why were Ricardo, Inés and Gestas hunting mandragora anyway, and why didn't Cagliostro tell them where to find the black mandragora which is used to produce vampire-curing ácido górico? In *La invasión de los vampiros* we learn this plant only grows near the Lagoon of Death.]

[The imagery of the silent coach—impressively shot in slow motion and vanishing into the fog after it passes the camera—driven by a shrouded coachman (later shown to be a skeleton) may or may not have been



inspired by tales of the “Death Coach” (as recently seen in *Darby O’Gill and the Little People*) or by the silent

classics *The Phantom Carriage* or *Nosferatu* (although in the latter film the coach is shot in fast-motion) but this is an undeniably effective sequence.]

Frau Hildegarda greets the coach when it arrives at a gloomy mansion: the passenger is Count Frankenhause, her employer. The coach vanishes into thin air after the Count alights. After a discussion about his “illness,” his wife, her daughter and father (the latter two are living elsewhere), the Count and Hildegarda carry a large trunk out of the *hacienda* (through an underground passage) and to a nearby cave. The cavern is littered with coffins. After Hildegarda departs, the Count opens the trunk and mesmerised servant girl Genoveva emerges. “Now you’ll become an eternal servant of the Frankenhausens,” the Count says, and bites her neck, then changes into a huge



bat and flies away.

[There’s some confusion in the two films about locations and place names. The mansion where most of the action unfolds

is not (at least in the first film) the *Hacienda de las ánimas*, which is referred to a number of times as the property of Count Frankenhause. Instead, this mansion belongs to the family of his wife Countess Eugenia, which explains why the coat of arms on the wall is not that of the Frankenhausens. The mansion has secret underground passages, but these do not directly lead to the cave of the coffins, which is apparently located near the *Hacienda de*

la ánimas. It is possible that *hacienda* is used in the sense of a property—like a “ranch” or “farm”—and that no actual house exists there. This would explain why the Count is living in his wife’s family mansion.

However, in *La invasión de los vampiros* the mansion (the same one seen in the first movie) is referred to as the *Hacienda de las ánimas*.]

Gestas disinters a young woman’s corpse from a local cemetery and brings it to Cagliostro’s laboratory. The Count has assembled a small group of disciples to witness his method of destroying a vampire. Ricardo helpfully



recites what he’s learned about vampires: “There are two types of vampires—Living vampires, who may walk about like normal humans, but are forced by their illness to drink the blood of mortals, and Dead vampires, who stay in their coffins

in an undead state.” Lázaro, the servant of a neighbouring family, interrupts the meeting, telling his friend Gestas that the Countess has fallen into a coma and needs a doctor. Gestas says Cagliostro isn’t available, but Ricardo offers to see what he can do. After he departs, Cagliostro continues his lecture, stating that his family became interested in vampire-hunting after one of his ancestor’s wives was killed by a vampire. He adds that one clan of vampires is largely responsible for spreading the malady: the Frankenhausens.

Ricardo examines the unconscious Countess. Frau Hildegarda and Count Frankenhause come home and



assure him her condition isn’t life-threatening. After Ricardo leaves, Frankenhause slashes Lázaro’s face with a whip for violating his rule about admitting strangers to the

mansion. Frankenhause then awakes his wife from her drugged stupor. She demands to know why she hasn’t been able to visit her daughter or father. Calling him a soul-less, evil creature, the Countess drives him out of her bedroom at the point of a javelin, sparing his life only because he’s the father of her child.

Back at the Cagliostro residence, the scientist says there is a substance called “vampirina” in vampires’ blood; if vampirina is replaced (via a special device he’s invented,

which he demonstrates on the corpse Gestas stole) with acid derived from the root of the black mandragora plant, the vampire will be destroyed. He reminds his students that if a Living vampire is destroyed with a stake through its heart, the Dead (and dormant) vampires he created will rise from their coffins and become blood-seeking Living vampires. [Do you think this might be important, later? Answer: yes, but not until *La invasión de los vampiros*. It's interesting how Morayta carefully lays the groundwork for something which won't occur until the sequel.] Cagliostro has to leave on a trip, but he gives his daughter a large, ancient tome of vampire lore to safeguard in his absence.

Lázaro visits a sleazy grog-shop (it hardly qualifies as a *cantina*) run by Lupe, and says the Countess Frankenhause needs a new lady's maid. Another one? Lupe later confides in Gestas that she repeatedly procures girls—always those with no close relatives or friends—to be servants in the mansion. For some reason, the maids never last long, and “run away” (yeah, that's what they do, “run away”).

Inés, perusing the vampire encyclopedia in her father's absence, discovers the sinister Frankenhause coat of arms. Ricardo and Gestas are shocked: “Frankenhause” is the name of the Count and Countess, Lázaro's employers. To ascertain if the Count is a member of those Frankenhause (the vampire ones), Inés goes undercover at the mansion as the new servant girl, hoping to spot the coat of arms somewhere. Inés and the Countess become friends, although the new “maid” has to avoid the Count's lecherous (and hypnotic) advances. The Countess defies her husband and invites Ricardo to dinner.



Count Frankenhause is polite to his guest. There is a bizarre, irrelevant conversation between the two men about coffee: Ricardo knows it only by reputation,

while the Count admits he picked up the habit in Africa, and now imports his own beans. When the Countess grows drowsy and excuses herself to go to bed, Ricardo wonders if the coffee did it (actually, she was drugged by Hildegarda). No, Frankenhause replies, coffee has the opposite effect. Before bidding Ricardo goodnight, the Count says his wife's problems are mental, not physical.

Back at the Cagliostro home, Ricardo tells Gestas he's fairly sure Frankenhause is a vampire: there are no mirrors in the house, and the Count's never seen during daylight hours. But the vampire-hunters insist on verifying this by finding the coat of arms (as mentioned above, the coat of arms on display in the mansion is that of the

Countess's family). Meanwhile, Hildegarda accuses her employer of falling in love with Inés, and Frankenhause admits it: he won't vampirise Inés at the next full moon. The Count catches Inés sneaking around the house and shows her his coffin (in a hidden chamber); the Frankenhause coat of arms is on the wall. Inés temporarily eludes him by means of her crucifix, but passes out in the Countess's bedroom.

Hildegarda has Lázaro tortured and he confesses that Inés is working undercover for the Cagliostro clan. The Count changes his mind and says Inés will be his next



victim (then Lázaro has his tongue cut out for “talking too much”). Ricardo and Gestas arrive at the mansion; the bloody and mute Lázaro

(a nicely horrifying shock scene) directs them to the Count's bedroom, and his identity as a vampire is (finally!) confirmed by the coffin and the Frankenhause coat of arms. By this time, however, the Count, Hildegarda, and Inés (unconscious) have decamped for the coffin-filled grotto. Ricardo and Gestas confront the vampire in his lair; Frankenhause turns into a big bat and attacks them. Gestas holds him off with a torch while Ricardo takes Inés outside; Gestas is trapped in the cave and dies, but the bat escapes.

Frankenhause returns to his house and awakens the Countess: “We're going to visit your favourite place—the Lagoon of Death!” The next shot is of the Countess's

body lying next to the lagoon, bite marks on her neck. Cagliostro says Gestas died as he would have



wished, helping others. As the film concludes, Frankenhause (in bat form) flies away.

This inconclusive ending was a dead giveaway that a sequel was on the way. *La invasión de los vampiros* doesn't pick up exactly where *El vampiro sangriento* leaves off, although it is a clear continuation of the same story.

El vampiro sangriento is a fine film overall. Although the cast is relatively small (essentially 9 characters: the

Count, Countess, Cagliostro, Gestas, Ricardo, Inés, Lupe, Lázaro and Frau Hildegarda), the production values are excellent, with some substantial, atmospheric sets (superbly photographed by Raúl Martínez Solares) and a number of actual exterior scenes. The special effects are campy but charming: Frankenhause's hypnotic powers are represented by a still shot of his face, white spots painted on his eyes, and bizarre sound effects. The giant bat is admirably detailed, with a ferocious face (and, unfortunately, two big bunny-rabbit ears); the exterior shots of it flying are impressive (the fight between Ulises and the bat in the second film isn't quite as good, because the bat just swoops and swoops in an easy-to-avoid manner; we do get some nice close-ups of its fierce face, though).

The sound design (although this term wasn't in use at the time) of both films is unusual and (mostly) effective. There is almost no traditional, orchestral music; many scenes have only "natural" sound, but others are augmented with distorted, electronic-style music/noise or wordless choral music. The latter was probably chosen for



its eerie, other-worldly feel, but in fact the tone often clashes with the imagery on the screen: the voices of a choir are simply

not appropriate accompaniment for scenes of the evil Frankenhause and Hildegarda carrying out their nefarious activities. The final shot of the first film--the giant bat flying away--is scored with an almost triumphant orchestral theme!

The script is not free of outlandish coincidences--what are the odds that Count Frankenhause would be living (and I use that term loosely) practically next door to Cagliostro, whose family has sworn to eradicate the Frankenhause vampire clan? And that Cagliostro would never have mentioned the name Frankenhause (or, apparently, his obsession with vampire hunting) at all in the hearing of his adult daughter, her fiancé, or his servant Gestas? The too-easy employment of Inés as the new Frankenhause maid is acceptable in movie-logic, but it seems odd that the constant need for new servants would not have aroused some suspicion in a relatively small, isolated town (I mean, how many young women who have no friends or family could possibly live there?).

The plots of *El vampiro sangriento* and *La invasión de los vampiros*, while narratively linked, are really rather different. *El vampiro sangriento* is a sort of Gothic

melodrama, with definite overtones of Daphne Du Maurier's "Rebecca"-- Frau Hildegarda is a Teutonic version of Mrs. Danvers, loyal to her master and hostile to his wife--and Charlotte Brontë's "Jane Eyre." Exactly why the Countess married the Count in the first place, and when she discovered his horrible secret (and nasty personality) isn't clear--the fact that Brunhilda (the daughter of the Countess) is a grown woman when we see her in the second movie suggests that the Countess and Count were married for at least 18 years. Inés and Ricardo are something more than conventional horror-film lovers: already engaged to be married (thereby eliminating the need for preliminary "falling in love" scenes), they're both actively involved in unraveling the plot, and very little time is



spent on romantic stuff (the sequel changes the dynamic, replacing the Countess and Inés with a single character, Brunhilda, who is both a vague love interest for the protagonist and a potential victim of the Count). One of the more interesting aspects of *El vampiro sangriento* is the time spent on the friendship between Gestas and Lázaro; at one point, Gestas tells Cagliostro "he's my only friend." This relationship sets the plot in motion (bringing Ricardo to the mansion for the first time) and even though both men eventually pay a terrible price (Gestas dies and Lázaro is tortured and permanently mutilated), they



contribute significantly and gallantly to foiling the Count's plan (at least temporarily). Although Lázaro appears in *La invasión de los vampiros* his role is much reduced (and confusing)

and Gestas is replaced by a much more conventional (and ineffectual) comic relief sidekick.

There is little to criticise in the performances. Carlos Agosti is alternately charming and brutal as Count Frankenhause. His lack of screen time and dialogue in the second film is a serious flaw. Erna Martha Baumann is spirited, Raúl Farell and Begoña Palacios are fine. Acting honours probably go to Berta Moss, however, who's mean, stern, obsequious, imperious in turn. Pancho Córdova is best remembered for his comedic roles, but he was a multi-talented actor-writer capable of dramatic performances as well; as the scarred Gestas, he's both a "faithful servant" type and a character given a distinctive personality and the capability of independent action and thought. Enrique

Lucero's physical appearance usually condemned him to glum or even villainous roles, but he was also a talented performer and, as noted earlier, the friendship between Gestas and Lázaro (both Biblical names) is important to *El vampiro sangriento*.

La invasión de los vampiros: *La invasión de los vampiros* retains most of the atmospheric *mise-en-scene* of its predecessor, but plays out on a somewhat larger scale. The film's major flaw is that Count Frankenhause himself is reduced to furtive, inarticulate appearances (he doesn't



have significant dialogue until the 37 minute mark), and is dispatched via a javelin to the heart (while in bat form) far too early.

Carlos Agosti, Berta

Moss, Erna Martha Baumann (in a dual role this time) and Enrique Lucero repeat their roles. Lucero, as Lázaro, has no dialogue (no tongue, remember?) and his role is significantly smaller than before. One wonders why Lázaro stayed on as a servant in the mansion, particularly since Frau Hildegarda—the woman who had him tortured and indirectly caused his mutilation—is still employed as the housekeeper and his immediate supervisor! There's no suggestion that Lázaro's secretly trying to get revenge on Frankenhause and Frau Hildegarda, for instance. Raúl Farell is replaced by the almost-identical Rafael del Río, and Fernando Soto "Mantequilla" takes the sidekick role



(sort of) filled in the first movie by the now-deceased Gestas. A number of significant new characters are introduced,

including the Marqués Gonzalo (referred to but not seen in *El vampiro sangriento*), town mayor Máximo, priest Padre Víctor, and drunken *curandero* Efrén López. [The events of *La invasión de los vampiros* apparently take place about 2 years after the end of *El vampiro sangriento*: Padre Víctor has a list of 23 murder victims, beginning with the Countess, and if each one occurs during a full moon, this would mean 23 months have elapsed (unless more than one person is killed in each full moon period).]

As with *El vampiro sangriento*, *La invasión de los vampiros* features a striking and memorable opening sequence. The rising of the full moon terrifies the residents of a small town. The negligee-clad Countess Eugenia (or is it?) strolls towards the Lagoon of Death, followed by the lust-enchanted Paulino. He watches as she disrobes and enters the water (we only see her shadow and her lower legs)... The two figures move off-screen and Paulino's scream of agony and fear is heard...

[Later, it's made clear the Count is using his sexy, hypnotised daughter Brunhilda (not his late wife, as the townspeople believe) to lure victims out of their homes, and then he drains their blood. In the opening sequence, this is hinted at by the fact that the "Countess" is skinny-dipping in the lagoon when Paulino is killed, and by the "bat squeaks" heard on the soundtrack just before Paulino screams.]



A carriage containing Dr. Ulises Albarrán and Crescencio pauses as a group of *campesinos* carry Paulino's corpse to town. Crescencio urges Ulises to spend the night in the village, but his employer says he must push on to the *Hacienda de las Ánimas* (he does let Crescencio go back, however). [Crescencio is a local resident, employed by Ulises as his guide/assistant.] Ulises manages to get past surly Frau Hildegarda by presenting a letter of introduction from Count Cagliostro. Don Gonzalo, father of the late Countess Eugenia and grandfather of her daughter Brunhilda, is an old friend of Cagliostro and agrees to let Ulises make the mansion his headquarters for as long as he needs to carry out his experiments dealing with...dun dun DUN...vampires! Frau Hildegarda spiritedly objects (I wonder why?) but is overruled. Afterwards, Ulises goes to the village and attends the wake of Paulino. [Who was just found dead that very evening—these people do not waste any time.] Crescencio introduces Ulises to Paulino's father, town mayor Máximo (it's not stated if his last name is "Autoridad," heh). Every full moon, Máximo tells the newcomer, the undead Countess (or so they think) appears, a young man follows her, and is later found, dead. Ulises spots suspicious marks on Paulino's neck. He also meets Efrén López, the tipsy town "doctor" (he doesn't actually have a medical degree), who welcomes Ulises as a "colleague" (Ulises explains his degree is in "alchemy and occult sciences," not medicine).

Back at the mansion, Frau Hildegarda opens a window to admit a bat, which changes into Count Frankenhause and climbs into a coffin in a hidden chamber. [The Count is not really seen in this sequence, which has some nice

touches, such as Frau Hildegarda bowing when she opens the window for her master.]

Ulises visits priest Padre Víctor, who says the victims of the recent murders won't be buried in sacred ground until it's determined that Satan isn't involved in their deaths! He says Count Frankenhause was a "heretic" and if don Gonzalo ever was a "believer," now he has rejected God (or at least has rejected Padre Víctor, who's not

admitted to the mansion any more). No one has seen Frankenhause or his daughter Brunhilda, and don Gonzalo never has visitors anymore "except you," Padre Víctor adds.



[There's a nice cut at the end of this scene, as Ulises is describing the Frankenhause coat of arms, and says *vampiro*, to which Padre Víctor replies "*Un vampiro?*" and then there's a cut to Brunhilda walking down a passage in the mansion.]

Ulises watches the sleep-walking Brunhilda open a secret door to reveal a chamber containing a coffin and the Frankenhause coat of arms. Suddenly, both Brunhilda and Ulises spot a figure looking in through a window—the Count! Brunhilda screams and faints; Ulises goes outside in pursuit of the vampire, who has vanished. When he comes back inside, Brunhilda is gone, the chamber is closed (and Ulises can't open the secret door), and Frau Hildegarda shows up to chastise him for wandering around the house at night. She denies any other woman lives in the mansion.

Ulises, Máximo and some workers open the crypt of Countess Frankenhause. She is identical to the woman Ulises saw in the *hacienda*, and has two bite marks on her

neck. Ulises explains the difference between Living and Dead vampires: the Countess is a Dead variety, but would rise from her coffin if her killer (the Count) is staked. Ulises



tells the mayor that the bodies of the 23 victims must be burned, but Padre Víctor arrives and forbids it. Meanwhile, the Count is lurking around in the graveyard, irritated at the meddlers. He kills the cemetery watchman.

The full moon rises. [The chronology of this film is vague—how much time elapses between scene to scene is

not very clear.] The Count hypnotises Brunhilda and sends her out as bait. This time, however, Ulises intercepts a horny villager who's attracted to the sleep-walking beauty and sends the man home. Ulises follows Brunhilda to the *Laguna de la Muerte* and watches her disrobe and enter the water (not very gentlemanly of him, was it). While Ulises is distracted, the Count (in giant bat form) attacks him but is driven off with a stick! Brunhilda has completed her naked swim and fainted on the shore of the lagoon, so Ulises takes her home.

The next day, don Gonzalo tells Ulises that Frau Hildegarda said Brunhilda is destined to become a vampire (the first-born of each Frankenhause generation carries the curse) unless he cooperates with the sinister housekeeper and the Count. Frau Hildegarda steals the formula for vampire-killing acid from Ulises's room and gives it to the Count, who says he'll rule the world when everyone is converted to vampirism. However, Ulises can reconstruct the formula from memory, and don Gonzalo



offers Ulises the use of a fully equipped lab in the mansion for his experiments. Máximo says the special black mandragora plants grow near the Lagoon of Death. Ulises, Máximo, and

Crescencio (over the latter's strong protests) visit the cemetery to drive stakes through the hearts of the Dead vampires, beginning with Countess Eugenia. Crescencio immediately goes to Padre Víctor and confesses what he's done, but the priest says "don't be afraid of the dead, but rather the living: many of them are bad and ignorant." He adds "the people in this village are much stupider [*más*

bruto] than those in the rest of the world," and if they thought the dead could rise there would be great panic. Padre Víctor vows to drive the "sacrilegious" Ulises out of town.



Ulises and Brunhilda visit the Lagoon of Death. She hears her mother's voice calling her and has to be restrained by Ulises, who gives her a crucifix. He collects some black mandragora roots. The crucifix saves the sleeping Brunhilda that night when Count Frankenhause visits her bedroom, but the next day she complains to Ulises that her crucifixes always go missing. Ulises discovers some of the mandragora roots have been stolen, but he still has

enough to begin production of ácido górico. That night, Count Frankenhause appears in the lab and—changing into bat form—attacks Ulises. The bat is pinned to the wall by a javelin. This awakes the Dead vampires like the Countess (the lid of her coffin flies off violently!) and they go on a rampage.



Ulises, don Gonzalo, Brunhilda, Lázaro, Máximo, Frau Hildegarda, and Crescencio are besieged in the mansion by the vampire horde. Máximo and Brunhilda hear

their son and mother, respectively, calling for them. Ulises shows the others the giant bat transfixed by the spear: he needs to complete production of the acid to end the plague of vampires. The next night, the vampires are back. Frau Hildegarda goes mad and leaps out of a window: the vampires surround her corpse. Ulises pumps ácido górico into the bat's body, which changes into the corpse of the

(fully-clothed)

Count Frankenhause. The Dead vampires are now freed from their spell.



As the film ends, Padre Víctor reads the last rites over the tomb of the Count and Countess

Frankenhause (faithful Frau Hildegarda is buried with them). The Invasion of the Vampires is ended.

Conclusions: *El vampiro sangriento* and *La invasión de los vampiros* are not perfect films. *La invasión de los vampiros* in particular seems like a series of scenes strung together without much concern for logical progression or narrative coherence. As noted above, it's never clear how much time has elapsed between scenes, on which day (or at what time of day) things are happening, and so forth. Also, Count Frankenhause is shunted aside in the second movie, which deprives it of a strong villain. Protagonist Ulises spends more time wrangling with Frau Hildegarda and Padre Víctor than he does with the vampire count.

While it doesn't seem likely Morayta would have been directly influenced by the Nostradamus films (since only one of these had been released in Mexico City prior to the production of the Frankenhause movies), there are similarities between both series: the appropriation of a historical figure's name (Nostradamus, Cagliostro) and the mixture of fantasy and science. *El vampiro sangriento* and *La invasión de los vampiros* seem to refute the idea that vampires are supernatural creatures—it's "vampirina" that

makes them crave blood, and replacing this with ácido górico "cures" their "illness"—yet at the same time the series utilizes fantasy elements when it suits the narrative's purpose (Frankenhause can magically change into a bat, is repelled by a crucifix, and—in the second film—the Dead vampires rise from their graves when he's staked through the heart, evidence of a psychic/magic link between vampire and victim).

The science vs. superstition argument is pronounced in both films and *La invasión de los vampiros* also contains a significant strain of anti-clericalism, with Padre Víctor stubbornly opposing the scientific methods of Dr. Albarrán to "contain the infection" of vampirism. This is quite interesting, since traditional vampire tales promote the efficacy of prayer and religious symbols in combating vampires (although most of the time the vampire is defeated through violent methods which would also work on a mortal opponent). The final scene of *La invasión de los vampiros* is an odd one, with the priest conducting funeral rites for an evil vampire (whose existence he had denied), the man's murdered wife, and the vampire's fanatic follower, while the other surviving cast members look on solemnly (or, in the case of Lázaro, with a pleased look on his face!). I suppose Padre Víctor has reconciled himself to the existence of vampires and is conveniently ignoring the fact that he resisted every attempt to acknowledge and destroy them; the risen Dead vampires did attack the village (killing, among others, Efrén López), but it took Ulises and his use of ácido górico to bring the invasion to an end.

Although the traditional methods of destroying a vampire—a stake through the heart, exposure to sunlight—are also "physical," the idea that the vampire is a supernatural, evil creature (who fears the cross, holy water, and



so forth) with magical abilities (conversion into a bat, immortality, casts no reflection in a mirror) is diametrically opposed to the idea that vampirism is just an illness caused by a sort of germ.

A possible inspiration for *El vampiro sangriento* and *La invasión de los vampiros* is Richard Matheson's "I Am Legend," a novel published in 1954. Matheson's book depicts vampirism as a virus (not called "vampirina," though), and suggests that vampires fear traditional anti-vampire things such as crosses not because these have a supernatural effect, but because the vampires believe they do. In other words, "scientific" vampires react because they think they are "supernatural" vampires. The book also features a scientific means of destroying vampires (although this doesn't involve an infusion of goric acid).

And, like the climax of *La invasión de los vampiros*, there are scenes in which the protagonist can go about freely in the daylight but is besieged in his house at night by hordes of deadly creatures.

If Morayta was influenced by Matheson's novel, it means the "Count Frankenhause" films were the first to bring Matheson's concept to the screen, since the initial movie adaptation of "I Am Legend" was *The Last Man on Earth* (1964). The similarities between the "vampire seige" scenes of *La invasión de los vampiros* and *Night of the Living Dead*



may actually be coincidental: it is more likely that George Romero saw *The Last Man on Earth* than *La invasión de los vampiros* and thus adopted the motif of undead

creatures surrounding a house from the Italian-made film rather than Morayta's Mexican production.

"Scientific" monsters had previously appeared in some 1950s Hollywood films, such as *The Werewolf* (1956) and *The Vampire* (1957). However, neither of these films (nor Matheson's novel or the film adaptations of it) were period pieces: Morayta's pictures more closely resemble Hammer horror movies like *Curse of Frankenstein* and *Horror of Dracula*, i.e., traditional settings with some updated themes and content.

Ideally watched back-to-back in their original versions, Miguel Morayta's *El vampiro sangriento* and *La invasión de los vampiros* are certainly two of the finest vampire films produced in Mexico.



More Vampires

La dinastía Drácula [The Dracula Dynasty] (CONACITE DOS, 1978) *Dir:* Alfredo B. Crevenna; *Scr:* Jorge Patiño; *Photo:* Javier Cruz [Ruvalcaba]; *Prod Mgr:* Teresa Jauregui; *Co-Dir:* Claudia Becker; *Film Ed:* Ángel Camacho; *Camera Op:* Adrián Canales; *Makeup:* Antonio Ramírez; *Sound Op:* Guillermo Carrasco; *Re-rec:* Ricardo Saldívar; *Sound Ed:* Rogelio Zúñiga; *Union:* STIC

Cast: Fabián [Aranza] (*Dr. Ramiro Fuentes*), Silvia Manríquez (*Beatriz Solórzano*), Rubén Rojo (*don Carlos Solórzano*), Magda Guzmán (*doña Remedios Montovanes de Solórzano*), Roberto Nelson (*Baron "Van Helsing"*), Erika Carlson (*Madame Kostof*), José Najera (*Padre Juan*), Víctor Alcocer (*licenciado*), Kleomenes Stamatiades (*Duke Antonio de Orlof y Montovanes*), Roberto Spriu (*Andrés?*), Arturo Fernández (*Inquisitor*), Roy de la Serna (*Inquisitor*), Alvaro Tarcicio (*comandante*), Martha de

Castro, Armando Madrigal, José Manuel Moreno, Baltazar Ramos

Notes: *La dinastía Drácula* is not exactly a rare film, although it doesn't appear to have been released on DVD



(except possibly in Germany), but rips of the Eagle Video VHS are fairly easy to come by, and the film's been shown on television. There are still pockets of misinformation in print sources and on the Web, though: the title is sometimes mistakenly listed as *La dinastía de Drácula* (in fact this is the current title on IMDB), and leading actor Fabián Aranza

(billed only as "Fabián") has been confused with pop singer and occasional actor Fabian (aka Fabian Forte) (and neither man plays the vampire—that role went to Roberto Nelson, who had a brief Mexican acting career in the late Seventies). Although Baron "Van Helsing" (which is admittedly a pseudonym, he's also referred to as Baron de Orlof y Montovanes) says he is descended from the Dracula family, he's not actually named "Dracula" (or even Alucard).

La dinastía Drácula was scripted by Jorge Patiño, an

actor-writer with a substantial number of credits in both areas (he won Best Story and Best Screenplay Arieles for *Llámenme Mike*, in which he also appeared). Patiño's screenplay pays tribute to *El vampiro* (the *hacienda* name of "Los Sicamoros," for instance) and also borrows some elements from Bram Stoker's novel "Dracula" (vampires can turn into smoke/mist, after you "kill" a vampire you stuff garlic in its mouth, the name "Van Helsing," and so forth). Baron Van Helsing and Dr. Fuentes have a long discussion about vampire lore, discussing the things vampires don't like (garlic, a cross, holy water, river water, mistletoe, mirrors) and what forms vampires may take (wolf, dog, bat, smoke—earlier, a member of the Inquisition adds tiger and air to vampire-forms!).

There are 3 supernatural beings in *La dinastía Drácula*—the Baron, Madame Kostof, and Duke Antonio. The Baron is, obviously, a vampire, and Madame Kostof is not (she's some sort of witch or something—she turns into a black German shepherd, and is over 300 years old).



Whether Duke Antonio is a vampire or a warlock is unclear: his alternate form is of a dog (a Doberman Pinscher), and in his confrontation with the Inquisition he's accused of blasphemy, heresy, and womanising (reminiscent of a similar scene in *El barón del terror*), but not vampirism. He's executed via a stake through the heart, but that would kill anybody, not just a vampire.



Removing the stake brings him back to life, but only because it's done on *Walpurgisnacht* on the 300th anniversary of his death, which sounds more like witchcraft than vampirism.

In 1595, Duke Antonio de Orlof y Montovanes is condemned by the Inquisition, staked through his heart, and buried in a cursed cavern, as his distraught lover looks on. 300 years later, the lover—now identified as Madame Kostof—arrives in Mexico. [Stock footage of an obviously 20th-century freighter is spliced in.] She has a large crate from which emerge strange growling noises. Madame Kostof has rented a large house but is interested in buying the neighbouring estate “Los Sicamoros,” because that's where the cavern containing the Duke's grave is located. However, “Los Sicamoros” is owned by don Carlos Solórzano, his wife doña Remedios, and their grown daughter Beatriz, and they don't want to sell.

Madame Kostof's mysterious crate contains a coffin and the coffin contains vampire Baron Van Helsing. [His



exact relationship to Madame Kostof and Duke Antonio is unclear, although it seems he may be the Duke's brother or something.] The Baron promptly starts preying on the local residents. Breaking standard film taboos, the Baron even murders two children

by drinking their blood. Dr. Ramiro Fuentes, the fiancé of Beatriz Solórzano, is a student of the supernatural and suspects vampires, which upsets local priest Padre Juan.

[*La dinastía Drácula* features a rather interesting twist on the familiar “faith and/or superstition vs. science” theme. Ramiro is a medical doctor and there are several hints that he and Padre Juan have been at odds before (although he's never referred to as such, he could be a “free thinker” and thus anti-religion). However, Ramiro is not the typical skeptic, and he has to convince Padre Juan

of the existence of vampires. At the end of the movie, it is Padre Juan and his religious faith which defeat the forces of evil (Ramiro is tied up and helpless for the entire climax). Curiously, although the Inquisition is depicted as correct and reasonable in their execution of the evil Duke Antonio, Beatriz follows the politically-correct party line (especially in Seventies cinema) and refers to the Inquisition as a “bunch of crazy fanatics.”]

Madame Kostof visits “Los Sicamoros” and Beatriz shows her the barred entrance to the cursed cavern. Later, Baron Van Helsing (who has “just arrived”) also makes his pitch to buy the

hacienda and is politely rejected. That night he hypnotises doña Remedios, lures her outside, and kills her. The next evening, doña Remedios (now a vampire) returns to her home and attacks



Beatriz, but flees when don Carlos knocks on his daughter's bedroom door. Ramiro doesn't think Beatriz imagined this visit and convinces Padre Juan to accompany him to the crypt where doña Remedios is buried. They discover the coffin is empty; leaving the crypt, they watch as vampire-Remedios arrives, changes into a cloud of smoke, and seeps back into her coffin. In a relatively intense scene, the two men stake doña Remedios and fill her mouth with cloves of garlic.

Ramiro has a meeting with the Baron at the house Madame Kostof has rented. She's not there, although the Baron is accompanied by his faithful black dog (which takes a dislike to Ramiro). Ramiro says he knows the Baron is a vampire and is determined to foil his plan to revive the Duke on *Walpurgisnacht*. Although, in response to the Baron's questions, Ramiro admitted he wasn't carrying a cross, holy water, etc., he didn't say “Communion wafer,” and this sacred object repels the vampire's assault. But it doesn't stop the black dog, who attacks the doctor while the vampire changes into a bat and escapes. The Baron hypnotises and abducts Beatriz.

In the grotto, Madame Kostof opens the grave of the Duke and removes the stake from the skeleton of her long-deceased lover. The Duke comes alive and they embrace, but Padre Juan enters the cavern and sprinkles them with holy water. A pillar of flame consumes them. Ramiro, Beatriz and the Baron are also there—Ramiro is chained to a wall and helpless. The Baron challenges Padre Juan to



combat, but the priest has to discard his holy weapons and fight with only his faith (it's not clear what the Baron would give up). Padre Juan agrees: the bare-chested vampire sinks his fangs into the priest's neck, but Padre Juan has palmed a crucifix and he applies it to the Baron's back. More flames, and they are both destroyed. The



chains drop from Ramiro's hands and he carries Beatriz out of the cavern.

La dinastía Drácula doesn't look cheap, aside from the traditional rubber bat (which appears far too often for comfort). The

Inquisition sequences feature a decent-sized crowd of extras, and the costumes and other period aspects are satisfactory. The film was shot on location at the luxurious *Hacienda de La Gavia* (in the state of México—a website indicates it was for sale for



\$15 million recently), the ex-Convento de Acolman (also in México state), and the very familiar grottos of Cacahuamilpa (state of Guerrero—these caverns can be seen in many Mexican films). The “transformation”

special effects are simple—either straight cuts or cuts disguised by

bursts of fire or smoke, with dissolves only used for the resurrection of Duke Antonio.

CONACITE DOS was one of three government-backed production companies created under the Luis Echeverría administration in the 1970s (the others were CONACINE and CONACITE UNO).

Few if any of the government-sponsored films had producer credits, but *La dinastía Drácula* also omits any

credit for the music score. The score seems to consist of “library music” but it is for the most part quite appropriate and effective. The other technical aspects are fine,

although director Alfredo B. Crevenna goes a little zoom-happy in his attempts to create shock moments (it doesn't really work).

The performances are generally good, with Erika Carlson (sometimes spelled “Carlsson”) particularly effective as Madame Kostof.

Roberto Nelson (occasionally billed as “Bob Nelson”) made a few movie appearances in Mexico around this time (as well as some other work, including *fotonovelas*). In at

least one instance he's credited as Roberto Nelson Solís, which would suggest he had Hispanic blood, but any additional information about his life or

career has been difficult to uncover. Nelson's dialogue is post-dubbed in *La dinastía Drácula* (and in fact sounds as if it was done by two different people!). Given a huge helmet-hair wig and bushy sideburns, Nelson's “Baron Van Helsing” still manages to be alternately suave and savage.

A very late, traditional (one might even say “dated”) entry in the Mexican horror film cycle, *La dinastía Drácula* is generally rather good, but not a classic.



Funny Fantasy

“ERA UN HOMBRE TAN FLACO, TAN FLACO, QUE GANÓ EL CAMPEONATO MUNDIAL DE JABALINA... ¡LO LANZARON A 100 METROS!”



“LA CONSAGRACION DEL COMICO QUE SERA EL FAVORITO DE USTED Y TODA SU FAMILIA!”



ALFA FILMS, S.A., presenta a
EVANGELINA ELIZONDO - POMPIN IGLESIAS
WOLF RUBINSKIS
y la actuación especial de DANIEL “CHINO” HERRERA

EL SUPER-FLACO

con JOSE JASSO - ALFREDO VARELA JR. - NACRO CONTI - ARTERO CASTRO
Dirección: MIGUEL M. DELGADO Fotografía: JOSE ORTIZ RAMOS Música: FEDERICO RUIZ
Argumento Original: Gunther Gerzso Adaptación: Carlos Orellana
Distribuido por Columbia Pictures

El Super-flaco [Super Slim Guy] (Alfa Films/Columbia, 1957) *Dir:* Miguel M. Delgado; *Adapt:* Carlos Orellana; *Story:* Gunther Gerzso; *Photo:* José Ortiz Ramos; *Music:* Federico Ruiz; *Prod Chief:* Fidel Pizarro; *Asst Dir:* Mario Llorca; *Film Ed:* Jorge Bustos; *Art Dir:* Gunther Gerzso; *Script Clerk:* Ícaro Cisneros; *Makeup:* Angelina Garibay; *Choreog:* Ricardo Luna; *Sound Supv:* James L. Fields; *Dialog Rec:* Ernesto Caballero; *Music/Re-rec:* Galdino Samperio; *Union:* STPC

Cast: Evangelina Elizondo (*Rebeca*; *Brígida Loyo*), Pompín Iglesias (*Pompis*), Wolf Ruvinskis (*Rudy*), Daniel “Chino” Herrera (*Profesor Nicasio*), José Jasso (*milkman*), Alfredo Varela Jr. (*Pompis’ manager 1*), Nacho Contla (*store mgr*), Arturo Castro (*delegado*), Luis Manuel Pelayo (*Pompis’ manager 2, the Spaniard*), Patricia Nieto, Conchita Gentil Arcos (*Rebeca’s aunt*), Margarita Villegas, Magda Donato (*Celestina*), Los Xochimilcas (*wrestling fan band*), wrestlers: Enrique Llanes, [Guillermo Hernández] Lobo Negro, Hombre Montaña; Stefan Verne (*Pompis’ trainer*), Victorio Blanco (*spectator*), Pedro de Aguilón (*doctor*), Ramiro Gamboa (*TV host*), Harapos (*cantina drunk*), Antonio Padilla “Pícoro” (*ring ancr*), José Pardavé (*bus driver*), Joaquín Roche (*neighbour*), Maricarmen Vela (“*typist*”)

Notes: a repeated plot premise in Fifties Mexican cinema was “comedian gets miraculous physical/mental powers, hilarity results.” Examples include *Resortes (El beisbolista fenómeno, El luchador fenómeno)*, *Clavillazo (Una movida chueca)*, *Tin Tan (El Gato sin botas*—in this one, Tin Tan just thinks he has super-powers), *Loco Valdés (El supermacho)* and *Pompín Iglesias (El Super-flaco)*. [This motif would occasionally recur in later years, as in the Capulina vehicles *Capulina corazón de león* and *El naco más naco*.]

Alfonso “Pompín” Iglesias (1924-2007) was the son of a character actor who also went by “Pompín” Iglesias (“Pompín III” followed the family tradition and can be seen in various comedy films of the ‘80s and ‘90s). Pompín *hijo* made his screen debut in the early 1940s, and although he had leading roles in a handful of Fifties films



(notably *Un vago sin oficio*, an adaptation of the famous 19th-century Mexican novel “El periquillo sarniento”), he was mostly used as a supporting comedian in the cinema. He did achieve considerable success on television in the Fifties (teamed with Nacho Contla) and the Seventies (the “Mi secretaria” series, where his exasperated catch-phrase was “*Qué bonita familia!*”).

In *El Super-flaco*, Iglesias looks younger than his 33 years and plays a rather annoying, feckless character (in later years he’d be somewhat typecast as mush-mouthed bumblers, perhaps fallout from “Mi secretaria”). He’s only really amusing when he pretends to be the indigenous “Toro Chamula,” wearing a fright wig and traditional garb, speaking with an *indio* accent and mannerisms. To be fair, the script doesn’t help—“Pompis” (which is slang for “butt” but the film doesn’t make anything of this connotation, it’s presumably just Rebeca’s nickname for “Pompín”) brusquely rejects his neighbour Rebeca, preferring to obsess over sexy singer/dancer Brígida. This makes him seem rude and uncaring on the one hand, and

dangerously delusional (almost stalker-ish) on the other. Iglesias is not a physical comedian, so the slapstick sequences feel forced and are largely ineffective.

Evangelina Elizondo does a good job with her dual role (the characters share only one scene together and are



shown in alternate shots, so no special effects were needed). Rebeca is blonde, dresses demurely, is diffident and devoted to Pompis; Brígida Loyo is a sexy, gold-digging brunette who rejects Pompis until he becomes a famous

(and wealthy) wrestler. It’s not a performance for the ages, but the two characters are distinctly different.

Pompis lives in a working-class *vecindad*; his neighbour and co-worker Rebeca has a crush on him, but he obsesses over sexy performer Brígida (meanwhile, Rebeca repeatedly rejects the romantic advances of the milkman). Pompis and Rebeca are clerks in the “El Pie del Atleta” (Athlete’s Foot) sporting-goods store, which is adjacent to a gymnasium. One day, Brígida visits the gym, followed by her boyfriend, pro wrestler Rudy. Pompis flirts with Brígida but is rejected, even though she’s quarreling with Rudy. Later, Pompis watches Brígida perform at a nightclub and sneaks into her dressing room, but is once again rejected (by Brígida) and ejected (by Rudy). The dejected Pompis gets drunk in a *cantina* and passes out when he gets home.

Upstairs neighbour Professor Nicasio (who’s Asian despite his Mexican name) injects the unconscious Pompis (a physical weakling) with concentrated ants’ milk. The next day, Pompis awakes with super-strength, although in his hung-over state it takes some time for him to realise this. At work, he argues with three customers, all burly professional wrestlers, and the ensuing fight lands them at the local police station

(*delegación*).

Pompis is freed, along with two instructors from the gym, who convince him to become a professional



wrestler (with them as his managers). Meanwhile, Professor Nicasio (and his mute, little-person assistant Nicolás, who was reportedly shrunk as a result of a failed experiment) arrive at the police station looking for Pompis and are sent to a mental hospital due to their wild tale of a man given super-strength via ants’ milk.

His managers assign Pompis the ring identity of the “Toro Chamula,” a skinny but powerful indigenous person from Chiapas. He is a success in the ring and attracts the attention of Brígida, which makes Rudy jealous. [Although this is not shown, at some point Pompis reveals his true identity to Brígida, although he continues to play his role



while wrestling.] A championship match is arranged between Pompis and Rudy, but on the morning of the event Pompis discovers he’s lost his strength. He eventually realises his powers must have been the result of the

Professor’s intervention, but when he and his managers locate the Asian scientist, they learn his ant “herd” vanished while the Professor was in the mental hospital. Everyone in the *vecindad* is recruited to catch ants (thousands are needed to accumulate enough ant-milk for a dose of super-strength formula). Pompis is forced to enter the ring before the potion is ready, and is brutalised by Rudy. The Professor arrives at the arena but the second round begins before he can inject Pompis, and in fact Rudy falls out of the ring and lands on the syringe, thus becoming even stronger! Pompis is savagely beaten and defeated. He goes home and is greeted by a transformed Rebeca—she had gone to confront Brígida and instead was given a glamorous make-over by the singer, who really prefers Rudy. As the film concludes, Pompis and Rebeca are wed.

El Super-flaco is a rather bland, mediocre film overall. Gunther Gerzso must have spent most of his energy writing the original story, because his art direction is absolutely undistinguished: the sets are flat and uninteresting (a fair amount of footage takes place on location in an actual wrestling arena, but the studio sets are very drab). No special effects are used to convey the idea that Pompis has super-strength, which makes the extended wrestling sequences (and a brawl in a sporting-goods store) very boring and not humorous. Evangelina Elizondo performs two musical numbers which aren’t badly staged but are nothing special (although fad historians might be interested in one song titled “Préstame tu yo-yo,” about the popular toy).



El pistolero fantasma aka The Phantom

Gunslinger (Sagitario Films S.A.-Famous Players International Corp., 1967) *Exec Prod:* Rafael Lebrija; *Prod:* Armando LeMolle; *Dir:* Albert Zugsmith; *Scr:* Alberto Zugsmith, Blair Robertson; *Photo:* Gabriel Figueroa; *Music:* Gustavo C. Carrión; *Assoc Prod:* Stim Segar, Carlos Rivas; *Film Ed:* Jorge Bustos; *Sound Rec:* José B. Carles; *Music/Re-rec:* Galdino Samperio; *Sound Ed:* José Li-Ho; *Union:* STPC; Eastmancolor

Cast: Troy Donahue (*Phil Phillips*), Sabrina (*Margie Jones*), Stim Segar (*parson*), Ana Martín (*saloon girl Suzy*), Candy Raymond (*blacksmith*), Emilio Fernández (*Sheriff*), Germán Robles (*Cold Steele, the Devil*), Carlos Rivas (*Big Sam*), [René Ruiz] Tun Tun (*Óscar*), Raúl [Pérez] Prieto (*Látigo**), Félix González (*Trigger*), Pedro Armendáriz [Jr.] (*Algernon “Brains” Brawn*), Elizabeth Campbell (*Cookie***), Ivan Scott, Katie Wals, Julie Jannsen [sic], Victor Eber[g] (*hat-wearing Indian*), Syra [Marty], Billy Frick (*banker*), Carlos Riquelme (*Luis Morales, Mayor-cantinerero*), Manuel Alvarado (?Pepe), Enrique Reyes, Ellen Cole, Brígida Ángeles, Victorio Blanco (*bearded town resident*)

*this is his character name in the Spanish-dub

** her character name in the Spanish-dub is “Totopo,” which is a food product sort of like a cookie (more like a tortilla, though)

Notes: after years as a virtually “lost” (or at least difficult-to-find) film, *The Phantom Gunslinger* was released on DVD in the USA in



2013 and the Spanish-dubbed version has since appeared on cable television. This review is mostly based on the Spanish-language copy (although I’ve seen about 25 minutes of the English version).

The Phantom Gunslinger was shot in Mexico, in English, much as producer Zugsmith did with *The Chinese Room* (which shares some cast and crew members with *The Phantom Gunslinger*—Robles, Campbell, Rivas, González, producers LeMolle and Lebrija). Presumably most of the Mexican performers spoke their lines in English, while the Spanish dub features some original voices (Carlos Riquelme, for instance) but is mostly third-party dubbing. It’s unknown if the Spanish-language version shown on cable TV is the original Mexican release or not. The main title and credits are all from the English version, whereas original posters and lobby cards clearly have the *El pistolero fantasma* title. One might assume this was a newly-dubbed version from the re-mastered English copy...except that the dubbing, as noted above, features some of the original Mexican performers, so it’s clearly the soundtrack that was used for the Mexican release in 1970. [Perhaps the original Spanish-dub soundtrack was applied to the new print?]

[I’ve never seen a single piece of advertising material for an English-language release of *The Phantom Gunslinger*, nor does IMDB cite a U.S. release date, suggesting this version was never shown theatrically in the USA.]

The cast is a mix of Hollywood, Mexican, and international players. Among the latter is Billy Frick, a Swiss performer who’d achieved some attention playing

Hitler in *Is Paris Burning?* (1965) and had executive-produced a previous Zugsmith film (*Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, coincidentally released on DVD in the same package as *The Phantom Gunslinger*). Frick, who appears only briefly in *The Phantom Gunslinger*, was the manager and boyfriend of exotic dancer Syra Marty (billed here and in *Fanny Hill* as just “Syra”). Busty British model/actress Sabrina (real name, Norma Ann Sykes) played the leading female role.



On the Mexican side, veteran bit player Victorio Blanco gets a lot of screen time as a bearded town resident, and Stillman “Stim” Segar—involvement in numerous English-language versions of Mexican films (and Hollywood movies shot in Mexico) in the late 50s and 1960s—also gets some face time as the town parson. [Segar was killed in an airplane crash in Mexico in early 1969.]

One interesting thing about the casting of *The Phantom Gunslinger* is that it features virtually no comedians or comic actors, despite the fact that much of the humour is broad slapstick and comic-book style absurdity. While “straight” performers playing comedy might work in a more “realistic” Western comedy (such as *Support Your Local Sheriff* or *Cat Ballou*)—where the humour arises from the characters, situations, and dialogue rather than pratfalls, food fights, or deliberate anachronisms—the actors in *The Phantom Gunslinger* simply don’t have the proper comic timing or demeanour, try as they might. Compare this film to *Autopsia de un fantasma*, where Ismael Rodríguez surrounded his “dramatic” leading actors (Basil Rathbone, John Carradine, Cameron Mitchell, Amadee Chabot) with a supporting cast that included veteran comedians Pompín Iglesias, Nacho Contla, Manolín y Schillinsky, Susana Cabrera, Vitola, Delia Magaña and Harapos.

Not that the actors in *The Phantom Gunslinger* are necessarily bad—their performances in dialogue scenes are tolerable, and in the English-language version it’s fascinating to hear Robles, Armendáriz Jr., Carlos Rivas, Tun Tun, etc., speaking English. However, when one of the (innumerable) slapstick scenes begins, all these people can do is mug for the camera and take their pratfalls and pies-in-the-face with equanimity. Rivas is perhaps the worst-served by the script, as he plays a glutton and is constantly eating and drinking (and spilling food and drink on himself); Elizabeth Campbell, horror of horrors, is

intentionally deglamourised for the entire movie, only “revealing” herself as a woman in the final few minutes.

The film begins in the small town of Yucca Flats (“The Friendly Metropolis, Now Past 52 Population Including Indians, Dogs and Cats”).



The outlaw gang “The Terrible 7”—Cold Steele, Big Sam, Óscar, Algernon “Brains” Brawn, Látigo, Trigger, and Cookie—arrive, prompting the Sheriff to deputise inoffensive and inept seminary graduate Phil Phillips and then go on vacation (although he returns periodically, witnesses some violence, and runs away again). Steele and the others take control of the town, but are disappointed to learn the gold they expected to find in the bank was sent elsewhere. Leaving Big Sam and Óscar in charge, the other outlaws depart to obtain the gold. Phil accidentally shoots and kills Látigo; he tries to poison Big Sam but fails. When the rest of the gang return from their raid on the neighbouring town,

Phil and the residents of Yucca Flats band together to drive them out



of town. Phil and bank cashier Margie prepare to wed, but the outlaws come back and Phil is shot in the head.

Phil goes to Heaven but convinces St. Peter (who has an Irish accent in the English version) he has unfinished business in Yucca Flats. St. Peter agrees to let him go back to Earth, but warns him that if he does something bad, the next time he’s killed he might not ascend to Heaven. Phil wakes up in his coffin, alive. [In the Spanish-dub, when Phil reappears, alive, Cold Steele says “we should have put a stake through his heart.” “Like Dracula?” Big Sam asks, and Steele gives him a dirty look. This is probably an in-joke referring to Germán Robles and *El vampiro*.] A gunfight ensues: Óscar, Trigger, and Phil are all killed by ricochets. Back at the gates of Heaven, Phil asks to return to Yucca Flats once more, this time emerging from his coffin just before he’s buried.

The Terrible 7 is now down to four, and one of them defects: Cookie kisses Phil and reveals that she’s a woman. An extended saloon brawl between the outlaws and the town residents results in the death of Brains (he tries to push a poisoned marshmallow—or something—into Phil’s mouth, but eats it himself and dies). Cold Steele, Big Sam,

Cookie, Phil and Margie all enter the bank vault, which is now the entrance to Hell (presumably Steele constructed the trap door after he took over the bank). Cold Steele is the Devil. A game of “hot potato” with lit sticks of dynamite ends with a massive explosion. As the film ends, a blackened Phil, Margie, and Cookie arrive in Heaven.

Although all of the slapstick is horribly tedious and unfunny, *The Phantom Gunslinger* has some interesting aspects and few bits of actual humour. The early scene in which the cowardly Sheriff names Phil his deputy and then immediately leaves on holiday is familiar but still amusing, as is the scene when the Terrible 7 collect the



townspeople’s “weapons” (which include knitting needles, an old lady’s machete, a rolling pin, a yo-yo, hat-pin, boomerang, baseball bat, etc.). This (and much of the rest of the movie’s “humour”) is reminiscent of an animated cartoon and is also a little bit of a precursor to *Blazing Saddles*.

Made in 1967 during the Vietnam War, there are some topical references. The Yucca Flats Chinese Laundry is run by Chow En Lie (looks/sounds like...Chou En Lai, premier of the People’s Republic of China until 1976). A wanted poster for “Brains” Brawn lists his many crimes, including “Illegal Lobbying, Draft Card Burning, Back Alimony and incidentally Murder.” He’s “Wanted by the F.B.I., Scotland Yard and his U.N.C.L.E.” (a reference to the television show “The Man from U.N.C.L.E.”).



There are some outright bizarre and pointless bits as well. In one scene, Ana Martín’s saloon girl is drinking milk from a baby’s bottle! (She also has a running motif of knitting) The inclusion of Billy

Frick as the Hitler-esque banker (who brandishes a Luger pistol and a riding crop, as well as a horoscope chart) is incomprehensible, another absurdist “joke” with no particular point.

[According to IMDB, the “Blair Robertson” credited with co-scripting *The Phantom Gunslinger* was the wife of

director/producer Joseph F. Robertson (they wrote *The Slime People* together), who had only a handful of other film & TV credits. Since Zugsmith had been a one-man band (producer, director, writer) on a number of previous films, it isn’t known why he felt the need for a co-writer on this one. Robertson certainly wasn’t a comedy specialist or a Western specialist.]

Perhaps the English-language version of *The Phantom Gunslinger* is more tolerable than the Spanish-dub, but since the slapstick sequences still make up a large chunk of the footage, this is questionable. Ironically, the film isn’t badly directed in technical terms: Zugsmith varies his camera angles, cuts professionally, and the comedy scenes are reasonably elaborate. But they just aren’t funny (and most of them run far too long). I’ve nothing against slapstick, when it’s done properly, but Zugsmith does not seem to have had any feel for this type of comedy, and yet he wastes a lot of time on it. Even something as simple as the penultimate scene in Hell—when Cold Steele lights a stick of dynamite and tosses it to Phil, who flips it to Margie, then Cookie, then Big Sam, then Steele again—is longer than it needs to be and is not shot, performed, or edited in such a way as to elicit even a smile from the viewer.

The Phantom Gunslinger looks good and has an impressive cast, but it’s not very entertaining.



Videohome Horror

Sedución sangrienta [Bloody Seduction] (Fiesta

Films-Laser Film Prods. ©1990) *Exec Prod:* Aldo Monti; *Prod:* Omar A. Gonsenheim; *Dir:* Aldo Monti; *Scr:* Rubén Arvizu; *Photo:* Gerald M. Williams; *Music:* Clark Gault;

Exec Assoc Prod: Carlos King; *Prod Mgr:* Erasimo Fuentes; *Cam Asst:*

Eric J. Swanson; *SpFx:* Javier Delgado; *Sound:* Sharon Tammarine

Cast: Lina Santos (Marta; Fernanda), Eric del Castillo (Luis Alberto Fernández), Antonio Raxel (Miguel Bárcenas), Arturo González [Pulido] (Carlos Rentería), Pedro de Lucio (don Manuel), Javier Montaña (Luis), María

Rodríguez (María, maid), Ana Gracia (Laura de Fernández), Jorge Esparza & José de Jesús (detectives),



Rubén Arvizu (*Enrique*), Raúl Barba & Raúl [Leobardo] Cornejo (*priests*), José Ezqueda (*medical examiner*), Cristi del Castillo (*Toña*), Adrián Rivas & Rafael Barrón (*monks*), Alain Cristiani (*Raúl*), Giselle Cristiani (*Julieta*), Olga Carmina (*secretary*)

Notes: actor Aldo Monti briefly added directing to his resumé in the early 1970s (*Acapulco 12-22* and *Anónimo mortal*), then resumed this facet of his career with a handful of *videohomes* shot in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Most of these appear to have been shot in Tijuana (as was *Seducción sangrienta*) or Southern California, although Monti usually managed to hire one or two "name" performers to travel there from Mexico City to add a bit of box-office (or, to be more accurate, video-store shelf) appeal.

[Speaking of which, the VHS box art for this film is quite good, helped by a skull image "borrowed" from the poster for *Evil Dead 2*. *Seducción sangrienta* does not appear to have been released on DVD.]

Seducción sangrienta was undoubtedly made on a low budget, shot in 16mm (one imagines) in actual locations (a real antique shop, several people's houses, etc.), and there are some moderately glaring holes in the script, but Monti directs with some care and the music, cinematography, editing, etc., are generally good (the sound mix is an issue, however, with some dialogue inaudible and varying sound levels, but it's not bad enough to really harm the viewing experience). The performances are satisfactory, with the exception of Pedro de Lucio--he is either a terrible actor or he's a decent actor trying to convey how a "possessed"



person would act and talk (i.e., like a zombie). His line readings are almost uniformly flat and his facial expression almost never changes.

There's also one strange continuity issue: don Manuel

obtains a book (about the Inquisition in Mexico) and delivers it to Marta's house. She then meets him at his shop for a Satanic ritual. Coming home, Marta is given the book by her maid. So why did he make a special trip to her house to deliver the book? Because, obviously, these scenes were inserted out of continuity.

Businessman Carlos visits an antique shop in search of a birthday present for his wife Marta. Shop clerk Luis advises him to return, since a new shipment of unique items has arrived but hasn't been unpacked. Don Manuel, the elderly owner of the shop, finds a small wooden box in the shipment, and is seemingly possessed by it; he sells Carlos the box, promising it'll be perfect for Marta. At her birthday party, Marta (rather rudely) ignores all of her other gifts and is entranced by the box. [Frankly, it doesn't look that old or valuable to me--I have an almost identical one, and I'm not possessed by the Devil...or am I?] It

makes her fondle herself and dance around in lingerie. [It has the same effect on her maid, but fortunately not on don Manuel.] The next morning, she emerges from the shower and stabs Carlos to death with a pair of scissors. She dresses his corpse, drives it to an isolated spot on the highway, and leaves it there, the apparent victim of a robbery.

[Presumably she walks home. She's wearing a white jogging suit, which might not be the best outfit for lugging a bloody corpse around.]

Marta compels don Manuel to participate in a Satanic ritual in which they sacrifice his assistant Luis. She also kills two police detectives who are suspicious about her husband's murder. Marta makes the acquaintance of Luis Alberto Fernández, her late husband's lawyer, on the pretext that she wants to liquidate her husband's stock in his company, which is co-owned with family friend Miguel Bárcenas. Although Luis is married and has two children, he is lured into an affair with Marta. They concoct a plan whereby Luis will take his family to a remote cabin and murder them.

Marta is possessed by the spirit of Fernanda, a witch condemned by the Inquisition in 1690. Although she wasn't executed (she vanished from her cell and was never found), Fernanda still wants revenge on the descendant of the judge--Luis! What a coincidence! [In fact, everything in the plot is a coincidence: that Carlos would visit the shop where don Manuel would receive the haunted box, that his wife Marta would be Fernanda's exact double (and descendant), and that Fernanda's judge's descendant would just happen to be the lawyer for Carlos.]

Miguel is very suspicious and (rather easily, it seems) figures out the plot. He enlists a priest to perform an exorcism, and races to the cabin to save Luis's family. [Curiously, it's a different priest who confronts Marta, allegedly because the first one "died under mysterious



circumstances." This seems so arbitrary that one wonders if (a) the first actor wasn't available or (b) Monti wanted to give two actors a bit of work, so he split the role.] They burst in just as Marta is about to stab an unconscious Luis to death. The priest's prayers and holy water repel Marta, but she stabs him with her Satanic dagger and Miguel steps in to shoot her to death with a regular old pistol. Luis wakes up, and all is well (except for the dying priest and the dead Marta in the room).



Sedución
sangrienta doesn't contain any special effects, nudity or gore (some blood is seen but the stabbings are out of frame) but it's lively enough to hold one's interest. We never get to see "good

Marta," so Lina Santos portrays her as a sneaky, evil bitch from the very beginning. Eric del Castillo is adequate, while Antonio Raxel has a rather more prominent role than usual at this time in his career. Somewhat surprisingly, a number of supporting roles are (mildly) developed--rather than simply serving as cardboard props to advance the plot, they seem to have actual personalities.

Not a classic, but a film that was put together with some professionalism and care, and it shows.



Chupacabras* (Cine Falcón Prods., ©1996) *Exec Prod:* Orlando R. Mendoza; *Dir/Scr:* Gilberto de Anda; *Orig. Idea:* Orlando R. Mendoza; *Photo:* Mario Becerra; *Music:* Ramiro Pastrana; *Prod Mgr:* Miguel A. Gómez; *Asst Dir:* Rubén González; *Film Ed:* Dean St. Gilbert [Gilberto de Anda], Cuauhtemoc Ponce; *Makeup:* Esperanza Valerio; *Sound:* Ricardo Contreras; *SpFx:* Toshiro Hernández, Yoshihiro Hernández, Yun Hernández; *Action Co-*



ord: José Luis Quintero, Josué del Campo

*the video/DVD cover title is *El Chupacabras* but the actual on-screen title is simply *Chupacabras*. Since there are multiple monsters in the movie, the singular "El" is grammatically incorrect but I suppose "Los Chupacabras" would have sounded weird and would have tipped off audiences that more than one monster appears in the film.

Cast: Jorge Reynoso (*Dr. Jorge Carrasco*), Miguel Ángel Rodríguez (*Cmdte. Román Hurtado*), Lina Santos (*Amanda Villareal*), Isabel Andrade (*María Hurtado*), Mario Arevalo (*psycho preacher*), Yadira Santana (*Jorge's girlfriend*), Gabriela del Valle (*Estela, prostitute*), Gilberto de Anda (*Duncan MacGregor*), Guillermo Castillo, Miguel A. Gómez, Antonio Marroz (*Jacinto*), José Luis Quintero, Mario Cisneros, Josué del Campo, Julio Santos (*false "victim"*), Silvia Sánchez, Roberta De Enero, Verónica Valadez, Yoshiharo Hernández

Notes: the legend of the *chupacabras* developed in 1995 in Puerto Rico, then quickly spread to Mexico and other countries. Pop culture seized on the concept, with numerous films, *videohomes*, and television episodes (not to mention other media) cropping up as early as 1996 (and continuing today). *Chupacabras* was among the first features to deal with this theme, written and directed by veteran genre filmmaker Gilberto de Anda (*Cazador de demonios*, *Santo--la leyenda del Enmascarado de Plata*, *Masacre nocturna*, *Colmillos de furia*, *La noche de la bestia*, *Un paso al más acá*, etc.).

Unfortunately, although *Chupacabras* is a slickly-produced, well-cast movie (with a nice, eclectic music score), it is "all hat and no cattle"--there's simply not enough *chupacabras* action. Keeping your monster off-screen to build suspense (and hide any deficiencies in the monster-suit or design) is sometimes a wise ploy, but eventually you have to deliver. The *chupacabras* attack exactly once (off-screen) in the film's opening sequence, and then don't appear again (or even kill anyone off-screen) until the final sequence. There's a fake *chupacabras* murder in between, but this only sends the plot off on a pointless and time-wasting tangent.



As noted above, the film opens with an attack on a family of farmers near Reynosa, Tamaulipas. Husband, wife, and children are all killed by a mysterious creature who drains their blood. Cmdte. Román tries to calm the local population, enlisting his veterinarian sister María in a cover story about marauding coyotes. Meanwhile, in Canada, zoologist Jorge Carrasco's 7-week stakeout is rewarded by a Bigfoot sighting, which is ruined by the sudden appearance of hunter Duncan MacGregor, who shoots and wounds the creature with a crossbow. In Puerto Rico, a guide takes journalist Amanda to a cave containing a huge skeleton of a sabre-toothed bat creature--which may not be extinct, since something dispatches the guide as Amanda flees.

All of these characters wind up in Tamaulipas. Jorge, an observer from a scientific agency in Washington, is welcomed by Román and María; Duncan and Amanda

team up professionally and romantically. Another *campesino* is killed, but forensic evidence proves this was a copycat murder, not another *chupacabras* attack. Jorge analyses the saliva in the wounds of the first victims and discovers an element not present in any Earth creature.

While Román is distracted chasing the copycat--a psychotic preacher who drains the blood of people using a suction device--Jorge and María search ruined *haciendas* with underground spaces for the *chupacabras*. They're trailed by Duncan and



Amanda. Román chases a *chupacabras* to the same location. Duncan shoots the creature in a subterranean storage space, but everyone is shocked to realise there are more of the monsters there! Jorge tells the others to flee, then sets a fire with a flare, escaping just before the building explodes. As he and the others watch, a glowing orb emerges from the blazing ruin and soars into space.

The *chupacabras* are never clearly seen, but the glimpses of them (it might be just one suit used repeatedly)



are effective and tantalising: they're humanoid in shape, can apparently fly (?), have light-bulb eyes and a bald dome on an otherwise sort of hairy bat-ape body. It would have been nice to see one in better light, but the

major problem with *Chupacabras* is that they don't do anything between the first scene and the last. There are no suspense scenes, no brief glimpses, no monster-POV scenes of them attacking people (there are exactly two attacks carried out by the psycho preacher; the second occurs well after the audience has been informed of the copycat killer's existence which is a tip-off, and it takes place in the middle of a city as well!). For about an hour, all we get are scenes of Jorge, María, Amanda, Román, and Duncan investigating, driving around, etc.



This is extremely annoying because *Chupacabras* doesn't look cheap, the cast is fairly strong, and there was a

fair amount of potential in the basic idea. If the whole copycat sub-plot had been jettisoned, some more suspense injected into the middle section, and the final sequence expanded to 15 or 20 exciting minutes, this could have been a decent film.

The performances are generally good, with the exception of Mario Arévalo as the psycho preacher. Made up to look like "Loco" Valdés, Arévalo shouts all of his lines at full volume, with no attempt at subtlety (I blame director/writer de Anda, since Arévalo is usually a satisfactory performer). None of the major performers gets much character development except Jorge Reynoso: Lina Santos is a typical "annoying reporter," Isabel Andrade is bland and under-used, and Miguel Ángel Rodríguez does his usual macho *shtick*. Gilberto de Anda sometimes gives himself eccentric roles rather than straight parts: here he starts out eccentric but quickly jettisons most of his personality and becomes Just Another Guy.

This isn't truly bad (it might have been more entertaining if it was) but it's disappointingly tame.



Herencia diabólica [Diabolical Inheritance] (Cin.

Centauro, ©1993) *Exec Prod*: Charito Guinart; *Dir*: Alfredo Salazar; *Scr*: Alfredo Salazar, Guillermo Seguin; *Photo*: Marcelo López; *Music*: Jorge Cuervo; *Assoc Prod*: Hugo Gómez Morúa; *Prod Mgr*: Fernando Loza; *Asst Dir*: Leonardo Campos; *Makeup*: Marina González; *SpFX*: "Chory"; *Sound Op*: Germán Martínez

Cast: Roberto Guinár (*Tony*), Lorena Herrera (*Tony's second wife*), Holda Ramírez (*Ana*), Margarito Esparza (*the doll*), Alan Fernando (*Roy*), Raquel Adriana Loza, Fernando González, Rosa Corona, Fernando Loza, José Luis Gómez, Miguel A. Solís, Francisco Javier Flores

Notes: probably the last film of Alfredo Salazar (who died in 2006), *Herencia diabólica* combines aspects of *Muñecos infernales*, *Una rata en la oscuridad* and *Muerte infernal* (produced by Guinár from a story by Salazar), not to mention the Hollywood hit *Child's Play* (1988). A direct-to-video production, the picture suffers from rather drab photography and--in common with the latter two films just mentioned--a rather vague plot, but has a few entertaining moments.

Tony, a businessman in New York, learns his great aunt in Mexico City has died, leaving him a large mansion. [This house, the real-life "Casa del Lago," is pretty amazing, but it's hard to believe such a property could still exist in private hands in Mexico City.] Tony and his wife Ana uproot themselves to claim their inheritance. Tony



gets a new job, and Ana learns she is pregnant. All seems well, but Ana discovers a hidden room with a sort of Satanic altar, and a strange clown doll which belonged to Tony's great aunt. Tony remembers his aunt had the doll all her life, and after her husband died she became increasingly attached to it (in fact, as seen in the opening



sequence, she died with it in her arms). Ana is shocked when the doll--left in the upstairs nursery--suddenly

reappears in the kitchen. She locks it in a closet, but one night (when Tony is working late at the office), she hears a knocking noise, opens the closet door, and is confronted by the doll, alive! Ana, recoiling in terror, tumbles down a flight of stairs to her death. Her unborn child, however, is saved.

6 years pass. Tony presents his son Roy with the clown doll, and it becomes the boy's inseparable companion. Tony also marries again: his blonde secretary is his new wife. She gets along with Roy, but soon becomes suspicious of the clown doll. She tries to get rid of it--locking it in a closet, tossing it into the lake, wrapping it up in a box and letting a bum steal it from her car--but the doll always comes back. (It stabs the bum in the eye with a broken bottle when he lets it out of the package; rats crawl over his corpse, perhaps a reference to Salazar's *Una rata en la oscuridad*?) One night, while Tony and his wife are out to dinner, Roy's nursemaid tries to take the doll away from him (bad move). The doll comes alive, chases her outside, causes a rope to wrap itself around her, and then tosses her off a parapet to her death.

Tony's wife attempts to dismember the doll but it animates itself and chases her with a knife, slowly, for a long time. She's eventually stabbed and falls off a cliff into the lake. Roy and the doll shake hands. As the film concludes, Tony and Roy board a plane to return to the USA. The doll, of course, is with them



Herencia infernal suffers in comparison with *Muerte infernal*, since the earlier movie's doll was much creepier (and in fact was supposed to be a mummified corpse, not an actual doll), and its relationship with its "owner" was subtler and more shaded (in large part because it was owned by a young man rather than a little kid). The clown doll in *Herencia infernal* is not especially menacing in

appearance, and has little personality until the very end, when it smiles. It does, in one dream sequence, climb into bed with Lorena Herrera and grope her, but even this is a pale version of the lecherous jester in *Muerte infernal*.

The script of *Herencia infernal* also frustrates the viewer by making the characters act stupidly. Tony's second wife attempts to dispose of the doll in idiotic ways, rather than just burning it up, ripping it into pieces (she finally tries this, but Lorena Herrera seems to have a hard time dismembering the doll and only succeeds in ripping off its head), or doing some other physically destructive thing. Ana, María the nursemaid, and Herrera's character, when they discover "it's alive!" all panic and run away from the diminutive doll (to be fair, the doll has a big knife when he confronts Herrera, but not the other two), rather than confronting it. And Tony is just clueless, defending Roy's right to keep his "favorite toy," and--after losing two wives--concluding that the house is to blame!

The movie also miscalculates in the final chase sequence. Lorena Herrera is an attractive woman, but she bleats like a sheep as she awkwardly (and slowly) flees from the doll, tottering on her spindly legs and platform heels, up and down stairs, through the woods, up and down some more stairs, around a lake, etc.. She keeps croaking "Enough, stop, noooo" until you just want to stab her yourself.

Aside from this embarrassing bit, Lorena Herrera performs adequately and in fact is the film's real protagonist, having more screen time than top-billed Roberto Guinar. Guinar himself is pretty good; Margarito Esparza, "the world's smallest actor," has little acting to do, while Alan Fernando is satisfactory if not outstanding as Roy. Holda Ramírez is also adequate; she appears nude in two brief sequences, but shows only her butt in the first and is silhouetted in the second, a far cry from the prolific nudity of *Una rata en la oscuridad*.

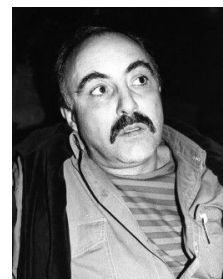
Overall, this is a pale imitation of Salazar's earlier work, but it's not that bad.



OBITUARIES

JULIÁN PASTOR

Actor-director Julián Pastor died on 24 August 2015; he was 71 years old. Julián Pastor Llaneza was born in Mexico City on 18 October 1943, the son of parents who left Spain after the Civil War. Pastor dropped his engineering and architecture studies to become a professional actor in the early 1960s, and continued to perform on the stage, in films, and on television until shortly before his death. The recently-released *Familia Gang* (shot in 2013) was one of his final movies.



Pastor began writing and directing films in the 1970s (in later years he also directed television and plays). Curiously, while many of Pastor's earlier directorial efforts were "serious" works—*La casta divina*, *Los pequeños privilegios*, *El vuelo de la cigüeña*, *Estas ruinas que ves*, for example—he made a conscious decision in the early 1980s to become a commercial "director for hire" (*director de encargo*), "like the 'artisans' of Hollywood...a Howard Hawks rather than a Federico Fellini." (Pastor, interviewed for the *Diccionario de directores del cine mexicano*). His later films are still competently made but lack the socio-political commentary of his 1970s and early 1980s productions.

Julían Pastor was nominated for a Best Story Ariel in 1975 for *La venida del Rey Olmos*, in 1978 for Best Director and Best Story for *Los pequeños privilegios* and in 1981 as Best Director for *Morir de madrugada*. He was head of the Director's Section of the STPC union from 1986-99.

ROSARIO GÁLVEZ

Actress Rosario Gálvez passed away on 17 September 2015, the victim of pneumonia; she was 89 years of age. Rosario Doblado was born in October 1926 and began acting professionally in the early 1950s. She appeared in a number of films through the early Seventies, then spent most of the rest of her acting career working in *telenovelas*



(she had one final film role in Ismael Rodríguez's star-studded *Reclusorio* in 1997). Although she retired from public life after the death of her husband Luis Aguilar in 1997, Gálvez wrote her autobiography in 2000 and made an appearance on the "Mujer, casos de la vida real" TV

series that same year.

Gálvez and Aguilar appeared in at least 8 movies together after their marriage, but were rarely paired romantically on-screen. [To be fair, Aguilar was probably just trying to give his wife some work—Gálvez was never a big enough "name" to justify co-star billing.] In fact, in *La trampa mortal* (1961), Gálvez plays the mother of Aguilar's character!

Rosario Gálvez married Luis Aguilar in April 1957; the marriage lasted until Aguilar's death in 1997. Gálvez had one son from a previous marriage, Roberto, and Aguilar adopted the boy (Roberto died tragically several years later, accidentally shooting himself with one of Aguilar's pistols). Gálvez and Aguilar had one son of their own, Luis Aguilar Doblado.

BÁRBARA GIL

Bárbara Gil, whose acting career spanned 7 decades, died of a heart attack on 11 September 2015; she was 85 years old. Born in Jalisco in March 1930, Gil studied acting at the Instituto de Bellas Artes and made her professional debut on the stage in 1947; her first film

appearance was in 1949. In the early 1950s she had prominent roles in films such as *Quinto patio*, *Retorno a Quinto Patio*, *Tacos jóvenes*, *La tienda de la esquina*, *Marejada*, and *El luchador fenómeno*. She later played supporting parts into the 1990s, in addition to a substantial career in *telenovelas* and other TV programs. Her last acting role was probably a 2004 episode of "Mujer, casos de la vida real." She also spent 35 years as a teacher and administrator at the Instituto Andrés Soler acting school.

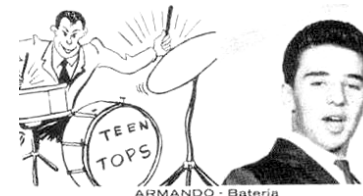
Bárbara Gil participated in several films made by the cooperative ATA in the 1980s, co-scripting *El extraño hijo del sheriff* and *Señoritas a disgusto*, and appearing in *Golondrina presumida*, *Señoritas a disgusto* and *La muerte llora de risa*.

Bárbara Gil was married to actor/director Miguel Córcega, who died in 2008. They had three children.



ARMANDO "MANNY" MARTÍNEZ

Armando "Manny" Martínez, drummer for the Sixties pop group "Teen Tops," died on 16 September 2015; he had been suffering with cancer. Martínez, who was 73 years old, helped form the group at the end of the 1950s; the other members



were Enrique Guzmán (vocalist), Sergio Martell (piano), Manny's brother Jesús "El Tutti" (guitar) and Rogelio Tenorio (bass). The band's first record was the 1960 hit "La plaga" (backed with a cover of "Jailhouse Rock"). Guzmán eventually left the Teen Tops for a solo singing and acting career, and the group replaced him with other singers before disbanding in 1965. There were reunions in later years (with some differences in personnel), and Manny Martínez continued performing in other venues as well.

Los Teen Tops can be seen in 1962's *Pilotos de la muerte*, with singer Dyno (billed as "Dino," aka Alberto Aveleyra) and *A ritmo de twist* (backing Johnny Laboriel on several songs).

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