

# The Mexican Film Bulletin

## Volume 23 Number 4

### December 2017

#### Another Year Complete!

Another year of **MFB** is done. We'll be back in 2018 with Volume 24, on the same quarterly schedule as before. Best Holiday wishes to all of our readers!



#### Obituaries

##### Evangelina Elizondo

Actress Evangelina Elizondo passed away on 2 October 2017; she was 88 years old. Gloria Evangelina Elizondo López-Llera was born in Mexico City in April 1929. She won a contest to dub the leading character in the Spanish-language release of Disney's *Cinderella* and shortly afterwards began a stage career as a dancer/singer. She became a popular film star in 1950s Mexican cinema,



appearing in various genres, although she was primarily a musical and comedy performer in this decade. Elizondo's films included *El castillo de los monstruos* (with Clavillazo), *Los platillos voladores*, *Te vi en t.v.*, *Manos arriba*, *Viva la juventud* (all with Resortes), and *Las locuras de Tin Tan* (with Tin Tan).

In the 1960s, she made fewer film appearances (and more of them dramas), then was off-screen for most of the 1970s. Elizondo made various *telenovela* and TV program appearances in the 1980s-2000s, as well as a handful of theatrical films like *Nos traicionará el presidente?* (for which she received a Best Supporting Actress Ariel nomination), *Don't Panic*, and *En el paraíso no existe el dolor*. Her last film work was 2016's *Princesa, una verdadera historia* (also the last film of the recently deceased Héctor Lechuga).

Elizondo was involved in a notorious scandal in 1960, when her ex-husband José Luis Paganoni shot and killed actor Ramón Gay, who was co-starring with Elizondo in a stage play. Gay and Elizondo had dined together and he drove her back to her parked car when Paganoni appeared, struck Elizondo and then shot Gay when the actor intervened. Paganoni was later arrested and sentenced to prison.

Evangelina Elizondo had a substantial musical career in addition to her acting work. In later years she became a writer, painter, and worked for the actors' union ANDA.

[Personal note: I have fond memories of meeting Evangelina Elizondo in 2003 while in Mexico for the "Futuro + Acá" conference. She was quite stylish, gracious and friendly.]



##### Claudio Báez

Actor Claudio Báez died on 19 November 2017; he was 69 years old. The cause of death was announced as pneumonia; his friend, actress Patricia Reyes Spíndola, said Báez had been suffering from emphysema for some time.

Báez was born in Guadalajara in March 1948 and began his acting career in the early 1980s. [Reyes Spíndola stated



Báez had been a veterinarian prior to becoming an actor.] He had a long career in *telenovelas*--often as a villain--from "Cuando los hijos se van" in 1983 until "Despertar contigo" (2016). Báez also appeared in a number of theatrical films and *videohomes*, including *Lobo salvaje*, *Narco terror*, *Playa prohibida*, *Contrato con la muerte*, *Hotel Colonial* (an Italian-USA coproduction set in Colombia but filmed in Mexico!), *Más allá del deseo*, *Bulldog*, and *La víbora*.

Claudio Báez was married to actress Isaura Espinoza (they appeared together in *Playa prohibida* and *La víbora*) but they later divorced.



##### Marú Dueñas-Claudio Reyes Rubio

Actress, director and producer Maru Dueñas died in an automobile accident on 11 November 2017; she was returning to Mexico City after shooting scenes for a *telenovela*. Also killed in the accident was Claudio Reyes Rubio, the program's director.



María Eugenia Dueñas was born in October 1967; she attended the Andrés Soler acting school and Televisa's CEA (Centro de Educación Artística). She made her professional acting debut in 1986. Her career was largely centered on the stage and on television, although she did appear in a handful of films like *Hasta morir* and *Las delicias del poder*.

Claudio Reyes Rubio was the son of writer Luis Reyes de la Maza and actress María Rubio. Born in August 1964, Reyes studied at UNAM and in the mid-1980s began working in television as a writer and later director.



## Félix González

Félix González, who appeared in numerous Mexican films from the 1950s through the 1980s, died in October 2017. His death was announced on 26 October 2017 by the Asociación Nacional de Intérpretes (ANDI) but no details were provided. González was 87 years old.

Félix Jesús González Medina was born in Mexico City in October 1930. He studied law at UNAM, then entered



the Andrés Soler acting school and also studied with famous stage director Seki Sano. González made his screen debut in *Sitting Bull* (1954), a U.S.-Mexican coproduction. His ability to speak English earned him roles in a number of other co-productions and Hollywood films shot in Mexico, including *Villa!*, *Ten Days to*

*Tulara*, the "Daniel Boone" TV series, *The Candy Man*, and *Missing*.

Among the Mexican films in which González had major roles were *La furia del ring*, *Secuestro en Acapulco*, *La Sombra Blanca*, *La otra mujer*, and *Soy chicano y mexicano*. He also worked on the stage and on television.

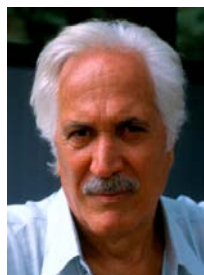
In the mid-1980s González retired from acting and moved to Tijuana. He was married twice and had five children and numerous grandchildren.



## Federico Luppi

Argentine actor Federico Luppi died on 20 October 2017; he was 81 years old. Luppi, born in the province of Buenos Aires in February 1936, suffered a serious fall in April and never fully recovered.

Federico Luppi made his acting debut on Argentine television in 1964, and went on to a long career



in films and television in Argentina, Spain (where he lived in the early 2000s, becoming a Spanish citizen in 2003) and elsewhere. He also directed the feature film *Pasos* (2005).

Luppi's notable Argentina films included *La Patagonia rebelde*, and *No habrá más penas ni olvido* (both directed by Héctor Olvera), and *Tiempo de revancha*, *Últimos días del víctima*, *La ley de la frontera* and *Martín (Hache)* (all directed by Adolfo Aristarain). He worked three times with Guillermo del Toro: *Cronos*, *El laberinto del fauno*, and *El espinazo del Diablo* (the latter two shot in Spain).

Other Mexican films or co-productions featuring Luppi were *Luna caliente*, *Mi querido Tom Mix* and *Nadie hablará de nosotras cuando hayamos muerto*. He also appeared in *Men With Guns*, directed by John Sayles and shot in Mexico.

Federico Luppi is survived by his wife.



### Las zapatillas verdes [The Little Green Shoes]

(Productora Mier y Brooks, 1954) *Exec Prod*: Ernesto Enríquez; *Prod*: Felipe Mier, Oscar Brooks; *Dir/Scr*: René Cardona; *Adapt/Story*: Carlos León; *Photo*: Agustín Martínez Solares; *Music*: Manuel Esperón; *Prod Mgr*: Eduardo Vega Lavín; *Prod Chief*: Enrique Morfín; *Sub-Chief of Prod*: Alfredo Chavira; *Asst Dir*: Winfield Sánchez; *Film Ed*: Carlos Savage; *Art Dir*: Javier Torres Torija; *Lighting*: Juan Durán; *Camera Op*: Andrés Torres; *Choreog*: José Silva; *Sound Ed*: Abraham Cruz; *Music/Re-rec*: Enrique Rodríguez; *Dialog Rec*: Rodolfo Solís; *Script Clerk*: Ícaro Cisneros; *Makeup*: Concepción Zamora; *Union*: STPC

**Cast**: Evangelina Elizondo (*Rosalinda*), Manuel Capetillo (*Juan José*), Delia Magaña (*doña Cándida*), Carlos Riquelme (*don Sandalio Botas*), Nono Arsú (*López, impresario*), Julián de Meriche (*Vladimiro*), Nicolás Rodríguez (*don Salvador "Chava" Cano*), "Lobo Negro" [Guillermo Hernández] (*Kid Gorila*), Silvia Carrillo



(*secretary*), Rodolfo Gaona, Rogelio Jiménez Pons (*"Frijolito"* (*poor boy*), Rosa María Montes (*customer of don Sandalio*), Antonio Padilla (*"Picoro"* (*ring announcer*), Ignacio Peón (*man at fiesta*), Zoila Quiñones, Jorge Rachini, Manuel Sánchez Navarro, José Luis Aguirre (*"Trosky"* (*dancer*), Mario Chávez [Cid] (*dancer*), Manuel "Loco" Valdés (*pachuco customer of doña Cándida*)

**Notes:** after a decent first half, *Las zapatillas verdes* falls apart in the second half, winding up as a sporadically entertaining musical/comedy/fantasy. The title is a reference to *The Red Shoes* (1948) and there is a very peripheral similarity in the premise (magic dancing shoes).

Rosalinda works in a shoe factory in Guanajuato, but dreams of becoming a star. Her mother Cándida convinces



factory owner don Chava to finance Rosalinda's artistic education in Mexico City. Rosalinda's boyfriend Juan José, who works in his father

Sandalio's cobbler shop, wants to become a *torero*. Both families move to Mexico City, setting up competing shoe stores side-by-side (Sandalio's is named "Las Zapatillas Verdes" for no discernable reason).

Rosalinda discovers she has no musical talent. Cándida tries to convince impresario López to hire her daughter, but he refuses (he does, however, offer Cándida a job after she impersonates Josephine Baker, but Cándida turns him down). During the holidays, Rosalinda puts her green shoes (made for her by Juan José) on her windowsill with a note, asking the Tres Reyes Magos\* to make her a star. The magic kings imbue the shoes with rhythm (further adding that any shoes Rosalinda touches will also have rhythm). The next morning, Rosalinda wakes up with talent. She becomes a successful musical star.

\*[In Mexico and various other Latin American countries, the Tres Reyes Magos--the "Three Kings" who brought gifts to the infant Jesus--are/were surrogates for Santa Claus, bringing presents to children on 6 January rather than Christmas Eve.]

This depresses Juan José, whose bullfighting career is going nowhere. He decides to become a professional boxer instead. On the night of Juan José's first bout, Rosalinda flirts with his opponent--Kid Gorila--and gives him a pair of shoes. [In superimposed flashback, she "remembers" the Tres Reyes Magos saying any shoes she touched would "have rhythm," but Rosalinda was asleep when they visited, so she couldn't have heard them--even assuming one could hear and see magical spirits.] Juan José is losing the fight until Rosalinda starts whistling, which makes his opponent's shoes dance (and, illogically, turn Kid Gorila effete). Juan José knocks out his befuddled opponent. The would-be bullfighter wins a number of other fights (not shown), "coincidentally" losing

only when Rosalinda is absent (which means she pulled the same shoe gag on all the other boxers as well?!). He then retires and becomes a successful *torero*. At the conclusion, Juan José becomes engaged to Rosalinda and his father proposes to Cándida.

Up until the point where Rosalinda becomes a star, *Las zapatillas verdes* is generally entertaining. The idea that both protagonists are not inherently talented and immediately successful in their dream careers is a bit of a novelty (more traditionally, the protagonist is supremely talented but there are other obstacles on the way to achieving fame and fortune). When asked to "dance," Rosalinda goes through a series of arm-flailing, high-kicking gestures which resemble the comedic dancing of *Resortes*, only not as accomplished. Juan José is initially timid when practicing bullfighting, although in his first real appearance in the ring--during a local *fiesta*--he acquits himself well.

There are some odd and illogical aspects even in this section of the film, however. Although we see Cándida convince don Chava to underwrite Rosalinda's move to Mexico City, without much explanation we are suddenly shown Cándida and Sandalio's two rather modern and substantial shops in the city. How did they afford that? [There is exactly one scene in which Cándida and Sandalio compete for a single customer, otherwise no business activity is seen or referred to, and Cándida in particular is elsewhere much of the time, as she tries to promote her daughter's career.] Later, when Rosalinda and Juan José take shoes to some poor children, she remarks that she and Juan José may be "poor," but there are others even poorer. Then Rosalinda goes back to the extremely large, well-



furnished, modern apartment she shares with her mother! One might assume that don Chava is financing all of this, but it's never mentioned.

The second half of the film becomes quite disjointed. Rosalinda has a very long musical number, then another one, then suddenly Juan José reappears; the boxing sequence is long but amusing (although it's quite unbelievable that Kid Gorila would put on a pair of shoes--given to him by a complete stranger--just minutes before the bout, and his behaviour once Rosalinda starts whistling is bizarre to say the least). Another musical number is tossed in (this time Cándida substitutes for Rosalinda, who's at the boxing match), followed by a brief scene between Juan José and Rosalinda, a montage of Juan José's rise to fame in the bullring, one more brief dialogue scene and...the end! All of the characterisation is basically discarded, and the plot is condensed into a few sentences, replaced by several overlong musical numbers

and an admittedly decent but extended comedy boxing sequence.

Evangelina Elizondo is good as Rosalinda, although her character's relationship with, and treatment of, Juan José in the first part of the movie is curious: he clearly loves her but it's unclear if she views him that way, and in fact doesn't seem to consider his feelings at all when she



announces her decision to move to Mexico City. Even when they're both in the capital and spending a lot of time together, the romance is very one-sided. Once

Rosalinda becomes famous, Juan José stops seeing her (for 3 months, according to the dialogue) and suddenly Rosalinda misses him. Elizondo's acting is fine and naturalistic, and her singing and dancing are very good.

Manuel Capetillo was a *torero* who also had a substantial career as an actor and singer. This was one of his earlier films and he's satisfactory in the role, although somewhat overshadowed--especially in the second half of the movie--by Elizondo. In the first bullfight sequence, some glaring closeups are inserted into actual footage of Capetillo in the ring, for no particular reason (after all, it is him doing the bullfighting, not a double). The boxing match between Capetillo and Lobo Negro is fairly realistic (not counting the magic shoes stuff) and well-staged.

Delia Magaña and Carlos Riquelme play the battling parents. Riquelme is alright but is basically miscast, since he has to labour under a ton of "old age" makeup and body padding. Magaña has a lot more footage than he and, as noted, gets to impersonate Josephine Baker and do some singing and dancing of her own. Magaña was more than 10 years older than Riquelme but looks and acts younger than her age, whereas Riquelme is forced to play a role more suited for someone like Carlos Orellana or Joaquín Pardavé (who probably cost too much). Nono Arsú and Julián de Meriche have flashy supporting roles, with de Meriche playing the familiar role of dance teacher and getting to spout off some exasperated dialogue in Russian.

Production values are satisfactory: most of the film was shot in the studio and the sets look a little antiseptic, but not cheap. René Cardona's direction is slick and proficient, and if you look carefully (especially in the first half), he discreetly uses a moving camera, which is nice. The "Josephine Baker" sequence uses misdirection and a subjective camera, withholding Cándida's appearance and just showing other people's reaction to her, until the comedic "reveal" of her in costume and makeup.

Reasonably entertaining but the structure and pacing leave something to be desired.



**La Sombra Blanca** [The White Shadow] (Prods. Geminis, 1961\*) *Dir-Scr:* Fernando Fernández; *Collab:* Antonio Orellana, Fernando Osés, José Delfos [no other credits on film]

\*many sources cite this as a 1963 production, but an article in *Excelsior* in October 1961 clearly states Fernando Fernández was shooting *La Sombra Blanca* at that time (in six days!).

**Cast:** Jaime Fernández (*Jaime Rodríguez*), Félix González (*Sombra Blanca*), Rosa Carmina (*Carmina*), Lola Casanova (*Rita*), Arturo Martínez (*wrestling promoter*), Marina Herrera "Marilú" (*Lucía*), Crox Alvarado (*chief of detectives*), Ramón Bugarini (*Ramón*), Consuelo Frank (*Consuelo*), Miguel Arenas (*don Cosme*), Yolanda Ciani (*Arlette*), Mario García "Harapos" (*Harapos*), Arturo Soto Rangel (*old jeweler*), Bruno Rey (*Bruno*), Julián de Meriche (*Manos de Seda*), Eulalio González "Piporro" (*himself*), Pepe Hernández (*El Linternas*), Tito Henríquez (*pianist*), Jorge Zamora "Zamorita" (*drummer-gangster*), Regino Herrera (*wrestling spectator*), Jesús Gómez (*police guard in hospital*); *gangsters:* Armando Acosta, Agustín Fernández, Carlos León, Guillermo Hernández "Lobo Negro," N. León "Frankenstein," José Loza, Vicente Lara "Cacama," Marco Antonio Arzate

**Notes:** *La Sombra Blanca* clearly seems to have been "inspired" by the adventures of El Santo, particularly *Santo vs. los zombies* (made in March 1961, 7 months earlier). Both movies were written by Antonio Orellana and Fernando Osés, both feature a silver-masked wrestler-superhero, and both include Jaime Fernández, Ramón Bugarini, and Julián de Meriche in the cast (and in both movies de Meriche portrays an ex-criminal now running a nightclub!). There is even a direct Santo reference: a poster for a match (El Santo vs. [observed] Muñiz) is very prominent on one wall of the wrestling arena set in Episode One. Advertising in at least one instance claimed Santo stars in the movie, and some re-release lobby cards used photos of Santo himself.

In one scene at the beginning of Episode Two (I think, the actual episode title card is missing), the *Sombra Blanca*



turns to the camera and speaks directly to the audience: "I am Sombra Blanca. My mission is to always remain anonymous, coexist with gangland, learn their secrets, and serve society. Helping the agents of the police, defenders of the law and justice. To combat the forces of evil that today, as [they do] almost every night, attack. That's it. And now, with your permission..." At the end of Episode Two, he turns to the camera (audience) once again and says "And that's all for now, friends. See the next episode, where I'll show you another adventure against crime."



Of course, *La Sombra Blanca* is a mere "shadow" of a Santo movie--it's cheap (with some bad sound and one scene badly out-of-focus), the three "episodes" are only loosely related and full of inconsistencies (Miguel Arenas is mostly called "don Cosme," but Bruno Rey slips twice and calls him "don Miguel"; Rey himself has no beard in episode one, a beard in episode two, and no beard in episode three, and so on; some henchmen appear almost randomly, popping up in widely-separated scenes even after being arrested earlier!).

**Episode 1 "La Sombra Blanca con la justicia"** [The White Shadow with Justice]--an unnamed young man (Félix González, but he's never given a character name in the movie so we'll call him Félix) and his pal Harapos work as stevedores in the market, loading boxes and sacks. Félix also wrestles professionally at night. His sister Rita [sometimes called Lolita] is the girlfriend of police Lt. Jaime. Félix reports to the arena before his scheduled bout, and is told he must throw the match (because people have been betting on him; presumably if he wins, the "syndicate" will have to pay off and thus lose money). Félix has a moral dilemma, but decides to win at all costs. Since the crooks suspect he might do this, they kidnap Rita and take her to a house in the suburbs. Rita attempts to escape--cornered on a balcony, she leaps to her death (this is later called "an accident," but she clearly commits suicide, possibly to avoid a "fate worse than death," although there is no hint of this at all in the gangsters' actions). The two gangsters report to their chief, don Cosme.

Meanwhile, Félix wins his match and beats up the crooked promoter. Jaime goes to Rita's apartment and is waylaid by one of the gangsters (waiting for Félix); he compels the criminal to take him to the spot where Rita is being held, but finds her corpse instead. Jaime vows

vengeance. Félix does the same--he tells Jaime he's going undercover, and asks Jaime to secure a spot on the police force for Harapos. "You'll be hearing from me," he says. The two gangsters who actually abducted Rita are found in a park, dead. Jaime reads a note from the Sombra Blanca, saying "Unfortunately I didn't kill them" (don Cosme ordered their deaths).

**Episode 2 "Joyas sangrientas"** [Bloody Jewels]--criminals rob a mansion of a fortune in jewels, killing the night watchman when he tries to raise an alarm. Meanwhile, the Sombra Blanca is working with the police to fight crime.

Through a rather circuitous method, the Sombra directs Lt. Jaime and Harapos to the "Gato" bar, where they also run into their reporter pal Ramón. Former jewel thief "Manos de Seda" (Silk Hands) manages the club for owner don Cosme; Manos swears he has gone straight. Cosme's men hire an alcoholic old jeweler to remove the gems from their settings. At the nightclub, cigarette girl Lucía tells Jaime her father--a retired jeweler--has disappeared, but she is kidnaped before she can give any more details. Lucía's father is later found, dead. Jaime arrests don Cosme and Arlette (a dancer at the club) as they try to leave the country with the stolen jewels wrapped inside Cuban cigars. The Sombra rescues Manos de Seda (who really had gone straight) and Lucía from the rest of the gang.

**Episode 3 "La venganza"** [The Vengeance]--although don Cosme is in prison, his gang continues to operate under the direction of Bruno (who was Cosme's clean-shaven sidekick in Episode 1, then became a bearded bartender at the Gato bar in Episode 2; he's clean-shaven again in this part) and Cosme's daughter, Carmina. Carmina, wearing a blonde wig, pretends to be a stranded motorist. When Jaime stops to help, he is knocked unconscious. The murdered niece of the chief of detectives is found in his car's trunk, and Jaime is placed under arrest in the hospital. Bruno and Carmina bicker about gang



matters; Bruno visits don Cosme in prison and stabs him to death in his cell! He then decides to bump off Carmina, but she is saved by Consuelo, one of the gang's couriers. [It turns out Consuelo is don Cosme's former wife and Carmina's mother.] Bruno shoots Consuelo but is killed by Carmina; Carmina and the rest of the gang are captured by the Sombra Blanca, Jaime, Harapos, and Ramón.

*La Sombra Blanca* is a rather slipshod affair as far as the plot is concerned. But one of the main problems is the relatively minor role the Sombra Blanca plays in the film. Most of the footage is of the criminals (making their plans, arguing, etc.), and runner-up goes to Jaime, Ramón, and Harapos, with the Sombra making only brief appearances.

This is somewhat consistent with the tack Orellana and Osés were taking with *El Santo* around this same time.



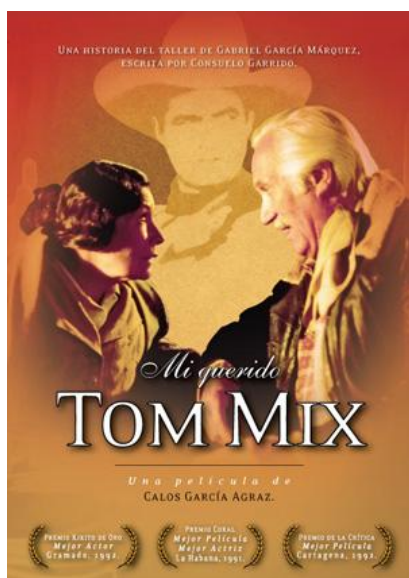
Still, *La Sombra Blanca* is reasonably entertaining, packed as it is with familiar faces. Eulalio González "Piporro" makes a comedy

cameo appearance: he's sitting in the nightclub having a drink when Harapos and Ramón come in; Harapos slaps him on the back, shows his badge, and tells him to "move along" (so Harapos can have his seat!). Even given the rapid shooting schedule and (one assumes) low budget, the film doesn't look that bad and while there are some rough spots, Fernando Fernández manages to keep things going at a decent pace (except for one song by Lolita Casanova and a dance by Rosa Carmina, both of which slow things down a bit).

One oddity is the lack of love interest for any of the protagonists--Jaime's girlfriend gets bumped off in episode 1, and from then on there is virtually no hint of romance, if you exclude Bruno's unrequited love for Carmina and the split-second suggestion from *Manos de Seda* that he'll "take care of" cigarette girl Lucía, now that her father is dead (she's not exactly a teen-ager but *Manos de Seda* does have quite a few years on her).

A curiosity piece, but still moderately entertaining.

[reprinted from MFB Vol. 12 #2]



### **Mi querido Tom Mix [My Dear Tom Mix]**

(Prods. Amaranta-IMCINE-FFCC, ©1991) Exec Prod: Laura Imperiale; Prod: Jorge Sánchez; Assoc Prod: Francisco Murguía, Miguel Necochea; Dir: Carlos García Agraz; Scr: Consuelo Garrido; Photo: Rodrigo García;

Music: Alberto Núñez Palacios; Prod Mgr: Tlacateotl Maya; Asst Dir: Salvador Aguirre; Film Ed: Tlacateotl Maya; Art Dir: Tere Pecanins; Camera Op: Jorge Suárez; Makeup: Angelina M. Chagoyán; Sound: Nerio Barberis; Stunt Coord: Alfredo Ramírez; Special Makeup: Guillermo del Toro

**Cast:** Ana Ofelia Murguía (*Jacinta*), Federico Luppi (*Domingo*), Manuel Ojeda (*Evaristo*), Damián García Vázquez (*Felipe*), Mercedes Olea (*Antonia*), Zan Zhi Guo (*Fong*), Carlos Chávez (*Jesús*), Jorge Fegan (*Mayor*), René Pereyra (*don Marcial*), Evangelina Peláez (*Clara*), Eduardo Casab (*Pancho "El Largo"*), Óscar Castañeda (*Botella*), Javier Zaragoza (*Alonso*), Román Valenzuela (*Melquiades*), Alberto Rodríguez (*Quintero*), Alejandro Reyes (*Granada*), Anilú Pardo (*Lila*), Rufino Echegoyen (*Trinidad*), Carmen Beato (*Socorro*), Eduardo Palomo (*Tom Mix*), Chen Ro In (*Fong's brother*), Miguel Vázquez (*don Jacinto*), Esther Navarro Díaz (*Maribel*), Jesús Letechea (*judge*), Luis Castro (*groom*), Víctor Hugo Ramírez D. & Lourdes Carrillo (*parents of the bride*), Gonzalo Curiel (*announcer*)

**Notes:** *Mi querido Tom Mix* is an interesting, mildly entertaining "nostalgia" type film that is one of a (fairly small) group of Mexican films about senior citizens made in past several decades. Others include *Los años de Greta*, *Sin remitente*, *El violin*, *La paloma de Marsella* (also directed by Carlos García Agraz), *Club Eutanasia*, etc.

Carlos García Agraz doesn't seem to have made a feature film in over a decade (although he did some television work later); in 2013 he was appointed to be Director General of the Estudios Churubusco. García Agraz is probably best known internationally for *Mi querido Tom Mix*, although his other work--including 3 "Héctor Belascoarán Shayne" detective films starring Sergio Goyri (he also made an earlier one with Alejandro Camacho in the role)--is also worth watching. Ana Ofelia Murguía has won two Arieles as Best Supporting Actress (in addition to the Lifetime Achievement award she received in 2011), and was nominated 8 additional times; she remains active, providing voice work for the Mexican release of the animated hit *Coco*. Federico Luppi, who recently passed away, met Guillermo del Toro while working on *Mi querido Tom Mix* (del Toro received "special makeup" credit), which eventually led to Luppi's leading role in del Toro's directorial debut, *Cronos*.

*Mi querido Tom Mix* is well produced and acted. There are a few minor flaws and inconsistencies, particularly with regards to Tom Mix's films. The movie appears to be set in the 1920s, yet *The Miracle Rider* is referenced (and clips seen), and that was a 1935 sound serial (all of the footage shown is silent); it was also Mix's only serial, yet the Mix movies are described in *Mi querido Tom Mix* as if they were all chapter-plays. The movie opens with scenes from a black-and-white recreated Tom Mix film which is decent enough, but the few seconds of footage of "Tom Mix" himself hardly seems to justify the prominent billing Eduardo Palomo receives in the role.

*Mi querido Tom Mix* is also slowly paced and not entirely logical, although neither of these is a major issue. There are two minor points in the latter part of the film



which are mildly annoying. First, Joaquina is abducted by one of the bandits, who (because she's completely covered up by a shawl) apparently mistakes her for a younger woman. However, we have not seen Pancho's gang abduct any other women in the course of their raids on the town, and why one guy would suddenly decide to do so is puzzling. Also, when Joaquina and the others hide in the cinema it's night, but when the bandit takes her away, it's suddenly broad daylight--and there's no clear indication that such a long period of time has elapsed.

In the sleepy town of Ocotito, Joaquina lives with her nephew, town doctor Evaristo, and his wife Antonia.



Antonia would prefer to live elsewhere, in a bigger town where people pay their medical bills in cash instead of livestock. Joaquina is fanatically devoted to cowboy film star Tom Mix, apparently believing his movie adventures are real, and she writes regularly to him.

Evaristo's nephew Felipe arrives to spend his vacation in Ocotito. He's not that interested in cowboys, preferring aviators as his heroes.

Meanwhile, wandering cowboy Domingo shows up from "the north." He gets a job on the ranch of absentee landlord don Próspero, helping nurse an ailing horse back to health. Domingo says he grew up in Yuma (in the USA); his family returned to Mexico, but are now all dead.

Although the residents of Ocotito feel they're safe because the town is small and poor, bandit Pancho "El Largo" and his men arrive one day, callously shooting one man, wounding others, and plundering homes and shops.

[In an amusing bit, Domingo--who boasts about his outlaw-catching abilities--tries to go out and confront the bandits, but the doorknob to his room falls off and he's trapped inside!] Pancho's



band retires to a nearby *hacienda* to enjoy their booty. Ocotito's mayor has disappeared in fear, so Evaristo forms a group of neighbours to defend the town when the outlaws return; he rejects Domingo, saying he's too old.

Eventually Joaquina, Felipe, Domingo, and Chinese laundryman Fong take refuge in the town cinema, El Edén. Joaquina covers herself with a shawl and is abducted by one of Pancho's men. As they speed out of town in an open auto, Domingo pursues on his horse (followed by Fong on a bicycle--he uses a martial arts move to defeat one bandit--and Evaristo's posse on horseback). Domingo, although wounded, shoots and/or lassoes several of Pancho's men, and Joaquina knocks out several more with

a canister containing a reel of Tom Mix film. Domingo and Pancho have a classic showdown and Pancho is killed.

Domingo decides to move on, but asks Joaquina to come with him in search of "adventure." They depart together.

Joaquina's character has no real backstory, and various commenters have speculated that she's suffering from an early form of dementia as evidenced by her obsession with Tom Mix--which, as noted above, is not simply that of a fan, but suggests she has only a tenuous grasp on reality. On the other hand, in virtually all other areas of her life



Joaquina seems competent and intelligent, even insightful. She seems more comfortable with her life in Ocotito than Antonia does, for instance.

While Domingo talks at times about his previous life, there are also gaps in his story. He talks about his previous experience catching outlaws and so on, but is demonstrably poor at quick-drawing his pistols and using a lasso (although he is depicted as good with horses and a decent rider). However, in the film's climax Domingo is suddenly converted into a bona fide Western hero, riding hell-bent, using his pistol and lasso to good effect in the process of rescuing Joaquina and out-drawing Pancho.



Felipe has a fair amount of footage but the film doesn't focus on him to any great extent. In some ways, he's more "adult" than Joaquina--he's interested in airplanes, is cautious and respectful (it's Joaquina who sneaks out, disobeying Antonia...although Felipe eventually follows her to the cinema), and doesn't confuse films with reality. Damián García Vázquez, who plays Felipe, apparently made no other films as an actor, but it seems he is the same Damián García Vázquez who later attended CCC and ESCAC (in Barcelona), then became a cinematographer on films like *Chicogrande*, *El infierno*, and *Güeros* (receiving Ariel nominations for the first two and winning the award for the third). I could be wrong, but it sure looks like the same guy.

In addition to the obvious Tom Mix references, *Mi querido Tom Mix* includes some other filmic in-jokes. Perhaps the worst is a scene in which Domingo recreates the "Are you looking at me?" scene from *Taxi Driver* at

length; this is very awkward and out of place. As the film ends and Domingo and Joaquina walk off into the sunset (leading a cow!), Felipe shouts for his great-aunt in what appears to be a *Shane* reference.



## Fanny Cano Films

**Los jóvenes amantes\*** [The Young Lovers] (Cin. Pelimex, 1970) *Dir:* Benito Alazraki; *Scr:* Fernando Vizcaíno Casas; *Idea:* Francisco Rojas González, Benito



Alazraki; *Photo:* Luis Cuadrado; *Music:* Adolfo Waitzman; *Prod Dir:* Manuel Torres; *Asst Dir:* José L. Ruiz de Marcos; *Film Ed:* Pablo G. del Amo; *Decor:* José L. R. Ferrer; *Camera Op:* Tedor Escamilla; *Makeup:* Romana González

\*this film is sometimes cited as *Los jóvenes amantes (Adoro)*, with the parenthetical title referring to a hit song by Armando Manzanero.

*Amantes de medianoche* was the video box (and label) title for a re-release, although on the film itself the video-generated title is *Amantes de noche*.

**Cast:** Fanny Cano (*Leticia*), Junior [Antonio Morales] (*Juan Caro*), Perla Cristal (*Berta*), Pedro Osinaga (*El Ratón*), Manuel Galiana (*Luis*), José Suárez (*Ricardo*), Luisa Sala (*Gabriela*), Porfiria Sánchez (*Leticia's mother*), María Isbert (*Pili*), María Elena Arpón (*Mercedes*), Gloria P. Berrocal, Pilar de la Torre, José Riesgo, Xan Das Bolas

**Notes:** director Benito Alazraki left Mexico for Spain in the early 1960s, returning to work in his native land in the late '70s. While in Spain, he worked mostly on TV documentaries, but did take the time to remake *Los amantes* (1956). Fanny Cano and Spanish singer-actor Junior replaced Yolanda Varela and Carlos Baena in the leading roles and the plot was re-worked slightly.

Prostitute Leticia decides to leave Barcelona and relocate to Madrid, where she is welcomed by her friend (and fellow hooker) Berta. Berta's pimp and boyfriend is El Ratón. Leticia meets impoverished college student Juan, who lives with his mother in a small apartment above the shop she operates. Juan has an official sweetheart, Mercedes, but he and Leticia are strongly attracted. They have an affair, which disturbs Juan's mother and causes him to break up with Mercedes.

Leticia and Juan visit her hometown, where he pretends to be a businessman and she acts as his secretary, to fool her mother. However, one of Leticia's clients is the middle-aged Ricardo, a friend of Leticia's mother. The jealous Ricardo orders Leticia to meet him for a free "date," threatening to reveal her true profession if she refuses. Juan goes to meet Ricardo instead, but the older

man drives away. That night, Ricardo pays a group of young men to serenade Leticia, singing a ribald song that exposes her as a "loose woman" to her mother.

Back in Madrid, Leticia breaks up with Juan over his actions, but they are reunited and he moves in with her. Juan gets a job but Leticia disparages his salary: "I send more than that to my mother every month." She says she will support him. However, Juan is humiliated in a shoe store when Leticia pays for his purchases. He later discovers his wealthy friend Luis has become one of Leticia's "clients"--"I'm a public woman," she retorts when he angrily hits her (their struggle turns into passionate love-making).

But despite his love for Leticia, Juan realizes he cannot stay with her. He returns to his mother's apartment. Leticia, after calling Juan on the telephone ("just to hear his voice"), takes a train back to Barcelona.

*Los jóvenes amantes* is fairly interesting, although the two protagonists are not exactly sympathetic. Juan--played by the inexpressive Junior--pouts throughout the whole movie. He's a college student and nominally (socially) middle-class (although it's clear his mother's shop is not successful), but financially he's so poor that he is nearly compelled to drop out of school (until he gets a job in a lab). Although he has an attractive and attentive girlfriend, he's apparently not experienced with women and certainly not familiar with the twilight world occupied by Leticia and her friends. He doesn't fit in, and knows it.

Leticia is introduced playing a practical joke in Barcelona (she heats up a coin and drops it from her apartment window, watching as a passerby picks it up and burns his hand). This doesn't provide much insight into her



personality, but it's about all we get: throughout the movie Leticia is "cool," displaying very little emotion and revealing nothing about her past, her beliefs, or her feelings. Her attraction to Juan is clear but--as in the scene mentioned above where she mocks his pride in his new job--she doesn't seem to grasp the way a "normal" couple functions. Berta and El Ratón are apparently her model: El Ratón repeatedly extracts money from his lover, even pretending to be a novice bullfighter so she'll pay his debts to keep him safely out of the bullring! El Ratón tells Juan that Leticia is a [gold] "mine" to be exploited, but Juan never gets the hang of it. Instead, Leticia dominates him because she controls the purse strings. As Leticia, Cano is attractive but just about as deadpan as Junior (and despite García Riera's comments that she displays a lot of cleavage, Cano is actually more covered in this movie than most of her Mexican features; her dialogue may have been dubbed by someone else also).



*Los jóvenes amantes* is not dull, and Alazraki uses the various Spanish locations (Barcelona, Madrid, elsewhere) to good advantage, although the video copy I saw has faded color. An adequate melodrama, nothing special.



**La Güera Rodríguez\*** ["Blondie" Rodríguez] (CONACINE-Luis Rodríguez Pérez, 1977) *Dir:* Felipe Cazals; *Scr:* Julio Alejandro, Emilio Carballido; *Story:* Artemio del Valle Arizpe; *Photo:* Alex Phillips Jr.; *Music:* Raúl Lavista; *Prod Mgr:* Roberto Lozoya; *Film Ed:* Rafael Ceballos; *Art Dir:* Javier Rodríguez; *Decor:* Julio Alejandro; *Costumes:* Guillermo Barkley; *Makeup:* Rosa Guerrero; *Sound:* Manuel Topete; *Union:* STPC; Panavision?

\*video title: *Macho rebelde*

**Cast:** Fanny Cano (*María Ignacio "Güera" Rodríguez*), Fernando Allende (*Juan Manuel de Lizalde*), Leonor Llausás (*nana*), Guillermo Orea (*viceroy*), Salvador Garcini (*José Jerónimo*), Eduardo Alcaraz (*don Mariano Briones*), Héctor Cruz, Arturo Allegro (*don Mariano's nephew*), René Casados (*Simón Bolívar*), César Castro, Gastón Melo (*viceroy's secretary*), Jorge Fegan (*father of María Ignacio*), Alfredo Torres, Roberto Dumont (*Archbishop-Viceroy*), Lilia Aragón, Farnesio de Bernal (*president of tribunal*), Adriana Rojo, Ludmila Martínez, María Barber, Lourdes Canale, Marcelo Villamil (*guest at viceroy's reception*), Rubén Márquez (*man in cantina*)

**Notes:** this is an entertaining, light-hearted historical film about the (real-life) Güera Rodríguez, who played a behind-the-scenes role in Mexico's fight for independence from Spain. Well-produced, written, acted, and directed, the biggest complaint I have (and it's not a big one) is the slightly protracted conclusion.

1809: María Ignacio, known as "Güera," is married to unpleasant military officer José Jerónimo (the marriage was an arranged one). The arrival of a new Viceroy from Spain prompts José Jerónimo and María Ignacio's father (on her part) to present competing petitions [their differing versions of the same scene are shown in flashback]. José

Jerónimo suspects his wife is unfaithful to him, and finds a pair of men's gloves in her bedroom (marked with the initials "SB," for Simón Bolívar) as proof. However, in María Ignacio's story, her two young daughters are with her at all times and her relationship with Bolívar is platonic. The Viceroy, swayed by María Ignacio's beauty and wit, agrees to transfer her husband out of the capital--"how many leagues away would bring a smile back to your face?" As it develops, the city of Querétaro is just the place.

Simón Bolívar is ordered out of Mexico. María Ignacio promises him a portrait of herself as a present, but the painting--a nude image of her [not shown, sadly!]--is discovered by the Inquisition. María Ignacio admits the face is hers, but asserts the artist must have used his imagination to depict her body. She offers to allow herself to be examined by three nuns to prove it. Once again, the Viceroy takes her side, but banishes her to Querétaro as punishment for poor judgement.

In Querétaro, inspired by Bolívar's democratic teachings, María Ignacio joins the independence plot. She donates her jewels, and otherwise assists the *corregidora* (the wife of a local official who is helping mastermind the scheme) and Juan Manuel de Elizalde. A new Viceroy is appointed--an archbishop--and José Jerónimo is recalled to the capital with his family. However, he is embarrassed when the Viceroy shows him the nude portrait of María Ignacio (that the previous Viceroy had kept for himself!) and drops dead while trying to carry it away.

Despite the obvious attraction between María Ignacio and Juan Manuel, they do not consummate their affair. María Ignacio instead marries the elderly don Mariano, whose rich relatives are scandalized. When don Mariano dies, they think they will inherit his fortune, but María Ignacio reveals she is pregnant. Although she is compelled to give birth before a large crowd of witnesses--to prove the child is hers, and not an infant she purchased as a ruse--María Ignacio is happy, and names her daughter "Victoria."

Time passes. In 1820, María Ignacio tells her long-time admirer Agustín Iturbide--who has been named head of the Royalist forces in the southern region of Mexico--that he would become a hero if he went over to the independence side. He does so, and Mexico is finally free of Spain. However, María Ignacio is saddened by the sudden death of Victoria. Iturbide is named "emperor." Juan Manuel returns to Mexico and challenges don Mariano's bitter nephew to a duel when the man insults María Ignacio and suggests she will become the Emperor's mistress. María Ignacio, learning of the duel, realizes Juan Manuel is the only man she has ever loved, and they are finally reunited (he's slightly wounded in the duel).

*La Güera Rodríguez* has a very modern, feminist viewpoint. The protagonist has several scenes where she defends the right of women to live their own lives and speak their mind, although this causes societal disapproval. One such sequence--when María Ignacio is summoned before the Inquisition, accused of aiding the independence movement--is a bit hard to swallow, as the officials are overwhelmed by her assertive nature and threats to expose

misbehavior by high-ranking officials and members of society. The movie is more effective when Maria Ignacia uses her wit and feminine wiles (as well as her intelligence) to charm the Viceroy, don Mariano, etc., and to effectively duel with José Jerónimo, Mariano's greedy relatives, and so forth.



The acting is quite good overall, starting with Fanny Cano. Strikingly attractive and sexy, Cano proves she was also a competent actress, although she receives significant

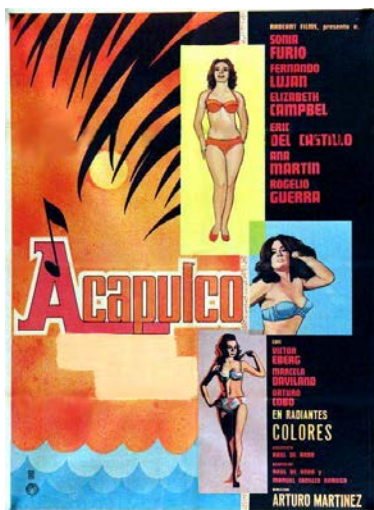
support from the script. Fernando Allende is almost too handsome, and doesn't have a strong character to work with, but he's fine. In support, Salvador Garcini, Leonor Llausás (playing the stereotyped sassy maid--it's easy to imagine Delia Magaña in this role in the 1940s or 1950s), and Eduardo Alcaraz are all good.

The costumes and art direction are top-notch, as is the photography, at least as far as can be discerned from the Eagle Video version I have seen: *La Güera Rodríguez* was filmed in Panavision and only the credits are letter-boxed, so significant amounts of the screen are invisible (this is very noticeable several times when characters are on the extreme right and left of the screen, so all the viewer sees is the middle of room while two voices having a conversation can be heard on the soundtrack!).

[Reprinted from MFB Vol. 12 #7]



## Beach Bums



### **Acapulco a go go\*** (Radeant Films, 1966)

*Exec Prod:* Raúl de Anda Serrano; *Dir:* Arturo Martínez; *Scr:* Raúl de Anda G., Manuel Canseco Noriega; *Photo:* Fernando Colín; *Music:* Enrico Cabiati; *Prod Mgr:* José L.

Murillo; *Asst Dir:* Tito Novaro; *Film Ed:* Raúl J. Casso; *Art Dir:* Artis Gener; *Camera Op:* Raúl Domínguez; *Makeup:* Antonio Ramírez; *Dialog Rec:* Enrique L. Rendón; *Re-rec:* Heinrich Henkel; *Sound Ed:* Sergio Soto; *Union:* STIC; Eastmancolor and Mexiscope

**Cast:** Sonia Furió (*Celia*), Fernando Luján (*Robert*), Elizabeth Campbell (*Marian*), Eric del Castillo (*Mario Treviño*), Ana Martín (*Rita*), Rogelio Guerra (*Jorge*), Víctor Eberg (*Renato, artist*), Marcela Daviland (*Margaret Reynolds*), Arturo Cobo "Cobitos" (*waiter*), Arturo Silva (*waiter*), Mayté Carol (*Beba Sandoval?*), Mario Sevilla (*Lic. Vélez*), Tito Novaro (*Mario's partner*), Wally Barrón (*police cmdte.*), Federico del Castillo (*police agent*), Julio Aldama and Rodolfo de Anda (*men dancing in disco*), El Klan (*band--heard on soundtrack only*)

**Notes:** this movie's title is somewhat misleading--while some action takes place in the "Acapulco a Go Go" discoteque, this is not really a youth-oriented, rock and roll musical. Instead, it is a multi-story melodrama (soap opera veteran Manuel Canseco Noriega's name in the credits should be a tip-off). [A fair number of the film's posters, etc., have "A Go Go" covered, suggesting exhibitors didn't think this was a particularly relevant title.] The soundtrack does include seven songs performed by "El Klan," including "Gloria," "Woolly Bully," and "Hang on Sloopy," which accompany footage of Ana Martín as a go-go dancer and scenes of other people dancing in the disco, but these are completely irrelevant to the plot and tone of the movie as a whole.

The three stories are intertwined, but I will describe them separately. Marian is a *gringa* (actually, her father was Mexican but she was born in the USA) who is staying at her family's home in Acapulco. She picks up "beach boy" Jorge and they have sex on the beach. Marian's step-

mother Margaret arrives and says she is renting out the house and taking Marian and her brother Robert back to Chicago. Marian



begins another affair with artist Renato, who paints her in the nude. They hatch a plot to kill Margaret. Marian brings Jorge in on the scheme, offering to pay him a large sum of money. Margaret, Marian, and Jorge go out on Renato's yacht one evening; Margaret says she has changed her mind and is going to give Marian and Robert their trust fund money, but the drunken Jorge pushes her overboard and she drowns. Renato says Marian must marry him in exchange for his silence.

Robert, Marian's brother, falls in love with go-go dancer Rita. She has a large, extended family and doesn't want an affair. Robert proposes to Rita; he will marry her as soon as he returns from the USA.



Mario is an architect in charge of a large construction project in Acapulco. He works day and night, which frustrates his wife Celia. She wants to have fun, but he is either working or is too tired. What she doesn't know is that he has a terminal illness and is racing the clock to



make enough money for her to live on after he dies. Celia goes to the disco alone and flirts with Jorge. He rapes her on the beach. Mario commits suicide by jumping off a cliff. Celia is arrested for his murder, but Mario's suicide note--which was mislaid at first--clears her.

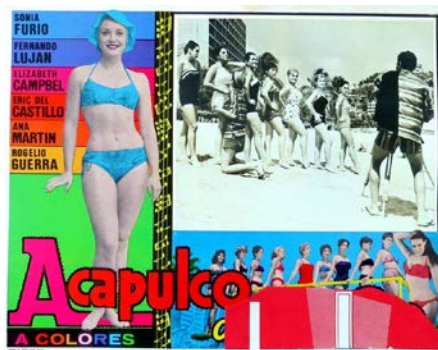
Jorge is brought in under suspicion of Mario's murder, but he thinks they are referring to Margaret's death. He confesses and

implicates Marian, who is arrested at the airport.

Unless you were expecting a teen musical, *Acapulco a Go Go* is actually a fairly entertaining picture, with a decent script and good performances. Elizabeth Campbell is ravishing as usual, and has a number of discreet, show-nothing nude scenes (the artist paints her nude, but when we see his finished work, it is half-abstract). She is quite convincing as the selfish Marian, who pretends to agree with her stepmother to lull the older woman into a false sense of security, then has her murdered, needlessly as it develops. Afterwards, Marian blames Renato for "tricking" her into the murder plot, but when she is arrested at the airport, she only tells her brother Robert that there is "some problem with my papers," so she'll have to take a later flight. Víctor Eberg does a good job as the crazy-but-clever Renato, who wears a Roman toga while he paints and manipulates Marian for his own ends.

The Furió-del Castillo story is given relatively shorter shrift, but Furió is very good as the sexy wife who loves her husband but is bored into deceiving him (she claims she is going to the movies with a female friend, but visits the disco alone). She even responds to Jorge's rape, after struggling for a time, and says nothing to her husband afterwards.

The least of the stories is the Robert-Rita romance, which is really thin and has no dramatic edge at all. Fernando Luján gets to do his drunk act and Ana Martín looks great while she dances on stage, but, aside from the fact that this is the only story with a happy ending, this sub-plot is quite expendable.



*Acapulco a Go Go* and *La muerte en bikini* were shot back-to-back by the same crew, but the films are not related to each other and in fact only share a few cast members.



**Azul (Eclipse de amor)** [Blue (Eclipse of Love)]\* (César Films, 1971) *Exec Prod:* José Juan Munguía; *Dir:* José Gálvez; *Adapt:* "Jorge Paro" [Jorge de la Rosa and Jorge Patiño]; *Story:* "José Mungal" [José Juan Munguía and José Gálvez]; *Photo:* Javier Cruz; *Music:* Rubén Fuentes; *Prod Mgr:* Alfonso González B.; *Co-Dir:* Javier Durán E.; *Film Ed:* José J. Munguía; *Underwater Photo:* Genaro Hurtado; *Sound Engin:* Francisco Guerrero; *Re-Rec:* Heinrich Henkel; *Sound Ed:* Ángel Camacho; *Choreog:* Tito Leduc; *Union:* STIC; Eastmancolor  
\*re-release title: *Pandilleros de la muerte* [Gang Members of Death]

**Cast:** Mercedes Carreño (*Noemí*), Alfonso Munguía (*Alfonso*), José Gálvez (*don José Gregorio Santos*), Nubia Martí (*Carolyn*), Alonso Castaño (*Prof. Dallegret*), Héctor Suárez (*El Barbón*), Julio Aldama (*Pedro Hernández*), Manolo Calvo (*umbrella hippie*), Socorro Avelar (*X-Pet*), Rosa Mondragón (? *Carmen*), Isadora (*hippie*), Millie White (*Fabiana*), Carlos León (*Juan*), José María Iglesias, Emanuele [sic] Olea, Antonio Zubiaga (*motorcycle hippie*), Jorge Victoria (*German helmet hippie*), Alejandro Rocha, Angélica Fernández, Rodrigo Gama, María Salvador

**Notes:** this was the only feature film directed by José Gálvez, a Colombian actor who worked in Mexican cinema (and TV, and on the stage) from at least the mid-1950s, often in villainous roles. *Azul* is a muddled mixture of melodrama, "lyrical" sequences, underwater footage, and scenes depicting the hedonistic life of a band of hippies, a familiar sight in Mexican cinema of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Don José is a wealthy but brutal man who lives in a luxurious mansion on Mexico's tropical coast (the presence

of "Mayan" characters ties in with the location shooting in Cozumel and the Isla Mujeres). His daughter Carolyn, raised elsewhere by her (late) mother, comes to stay with her father and is attracted to the handsome diving instructor Alfonso.

Alfonso is also the object of the affections of "native" girl Noemí, who even resorts to purchasing a "love charm" from a local *bruja* to captivate him (however, the potion is

accidentally consumed by elderly, comic relief archeologist Dallegret, who--in a scene resembling a Benny Hill skit--eagerly chases Noemí



down the beach). Noemí spots Carolyn and Alfonso making love; distraught, she wanders down the beach and is raped by hippie El Barbón and his gang, then commits suicide by walking into the ocean. Alfonso tries to avenge her death by killing one of the hippies with a speargun, but is forced to flee before he can finish the job on El Barbón.

Meanwhile, matching halves of a "love ring" owned by Alfonso and Carolyn alert don José to the fact that Alfonso is his long-lost illegitimate son, and thus Carolyn's half-brother. The two young people don't know this, but decide to run away together. However, they are surrounded by the hippies, entangled in a fishing net, and thrown into the ocean to drown in each other's arms.

*Azul*, without much rhyme or reason, cuts between scenes of the hippies and their raucous lifestyle, shots of Alfonso and Carolyn skin-

diving, don José scheming (he has one of his aides murdered--off-screen and apparently also plans to abscond with a sunken treasure the archeologist is hunting), and Noemí mooning around. The production values are satisfactory, but the pace of the movie is quite uneven. Alfonso Munguía and most of the supporting players are reasonably adequate, but Meche Carreño and Gálvez just run through their usual shtick (waifish but sexy innocent and crafty villain, respectively). Nubia Martí is very cute and has two show-nothing nude scenes (one of which was prominently plastered on the U.S. lobby cards for the movie) but her character is ingenuous and under-developed.



Not boring but unfocused at best.



## 1930s Lawbreakers



**Mano a mano** [Hand to Hand] (México Nuevo Studio, 1932) *Prod*: José Alcayde; *Dir*: Arcady Boytler; *Scr*: Armando de Aragón; *Adapt*: Arcady Boytler; *Story*: George Kallman; *Photo*: Alex Phillips; *Music*: Lorenzo Barcelata & los Trovadores Tamaulipecos; *Prod Mgr*: Alfonso Sánchez Tello; *Asst Dir*: Ramón Peón; *Film Ed*: Aniceto Ortega; *Art Dir*: Fernando A. Rivero; *Sound*: Jose & Roberto Rodríguez; *Chief Electrician*: José B. Carles

**Cast**: Carmen Guerrero (*Anita Chávez*), René Cardona (*Manuel Chávez*), Miguel Ángel Ferriz (*Armando*), Luis Barreiro (*employee of Armando*), Carlos L. Cabello (*bandit leader*), A[ntonio] Frausto (*Antonio*), Luis S[ánchez] Tello (*Luis, bandit*), Jorge Peón (*Pepito*), Alfonso Sánchez Tello (*don Poncho*), Manuel Tamés (*Enrique, cantinero*), Raúl de Anda (*employee of Armando*), Los Trovadores Tamaulipecos [Ernesto Cortázar, Lorenzo Barcelata, Agustín Ramírez, Carlos X. Peña]

**Notes**: Arcady Boytler was born in Russia and worked in films there, in Germany, and in New York before finally arriving in Mexico at the end of the 1920s. *Mano a mano* was his first sound feature, although since it runs only about 50 minutes some designate it as a medium-length film. Boytler went on to direct the famous *La mujer del puerto*, several early Cantinflas films and a handful of other movies before (possibly involuntarily) "retiring" from filmmaking and dedicating himself to running two cinemas.

*Mano a mano* is not only very short, it's not very coherent, and some of the acting is quite bad. The picture was made on a very low budget and existing prints are in terrible shape, but even a full restoration couldn't resolve all of its flaws.

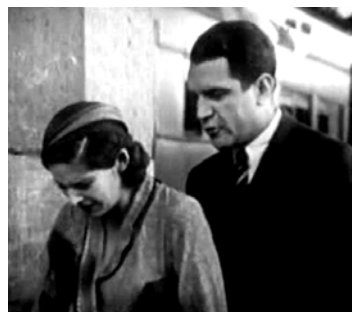
Manuel promises his sister Anita that they'll soon be on Easy Street. He loses all his money gambling, then sends his friend Armando a letter indicating he (Manuel) is going to commit suicide and asking Armando to break the news to his sister Anita. Armando consoles Anita and falls in love with her. However, he receives an urgent summons to return to his ranch, which is plagued with rustlers. Armando stops off to give Anita a photograph of himself, and overhears Manuel discussing the plot to bilk Armando [he conveniently arrives too late to hear Anita protest and



admit she really does love Armando.] Armando compels Anita and Manuel (who explains he changed his mind about killing himself) to accompany him to his ranch.

There are already large plot-holes evident here.

Apparently Manuel and Anita are brother and sister even though the opening scene suggests they're lovers. Manuel's "plan" isn't clear: did he deliberately lose money gambling to set up the scam on Armando? What if he had won? Also, Armando doesn't force Anita and Manuel to go with him to the ranch: they could have easily refused, but presumably Anita loves Armando and Manuel still thinks his plan can succeed. Once they arrive at the ranch, they're virtual prisoners, it's "20 leagues walking" (which would be about 60 miles) to the nearest town.



Various pointless interruptions occur. These include a *cantina* brawl between Armando's men (not him, though) and the rustlers. The actual brawl is filmed in an interesting fashion, with lots of extreme closeups, but takes forever to get going. There's also a bizarre sequence that combines (a) shots of a cattle roundup, (b) a *charreada* (similar to a rodeo), (c) a bullfight, (d) a cockfight.

Manuel and Anita take advantage of this distraction to flee on foot through the desert. When Anita collapses due to lack of water, Manuel abandons her. He's later found by the cattle rustlers and claims his sister is being held captive by Armando. The rustlers give Manuel a gun and ride off to raid the ranch. Meanwhile, Armando rescues Anita.

The outlaws attack the ranch. They would seem to be at somewhat of a disadvantage, considering they're using pistols and the defenders have rifles and are hiding behind very thick walls, but the villains must be good shots because they wound many of Armando's men and then Armando himself.

Manuel sneaks up behind Armando's foreman Antonio, intending to shoot him, but is ambushed by Armando's young nephew Pepito, who kills the scoundrel.

*Mano a mano* ends with a couple of songs by Los Trovadores Tamaulipecos, with Armando and Anita nowhere in sight.

Miguel Ángel Ferriz was only in his early thirties when he made *Mano a mano*, but he is miscast as the romantic

lead, looking older than his age in a role that called for someone along the lines of Jorge Negrete, Pedro Infante, etc. Unfortunately for Mexican cinema, at this early stage in its development there really weren't any established stars that fit the bill: Ramón Pereda and Juan José Martínez Casado might have sufficed, but apparently Boytler couldn't get them for his movie. Ferriz has some embarrassing scenes early in the movie and doesn't do much acting in the latter sections. Carmen Guerrero is not very good either; she looks a bit like Hollywood actress Evelyn Brent, attractive but also sort of mean-looking, and Boytler has an odd habit of shooting her from odd angles that emphasize this. René Cardona is probably the best actor in the bunch, believably sleazy throughout.



Also in the cast are Luis G. Barreiro (who only appears in the *cantina* scene) and Antonio R. Frausto, in an early incarnation of a typical Frausto role, the loyal *ranchero* or *campesino* sidekick of the hero. Raúl de Anda has a bit part at the end, and Carlos L. Cabello--better known as an assistant director--is adequate as the leader of the cattle rustlers.

The best part of *Mano a mano* is the riding footage, which is shot very professionally and at times framed in an effective and occasionally even artistic manner. This is a good thing, because there are a lot of such scenes in the latter half of the movie, but they can't really elevate the film by themselves. *Mano a mano* is historically interesting and it's only 50 minutes long, but it is not an adequate film in most aspects.



**El Tigre de Yautepec** [The Tiger of Yautepec]  
(Prods. FESA, 1933) *Prod:* Juan F. Azcárate, Jorge Pezet;  
*Assoc Prod:* Emilio Gómez Muriel; *Dir:* Fernando de Fuentes; *Scr:* Fernando de Fuentes, Jorge Pezet; *Photo:* Alex Phillips; *Music:* Pepe Ortiz, Guillermo A. Posadas, Max Urban; *Prod Mgr:* Juan Duque de Estrada; *Asst Dir:* Carlos L. Cabello; *Film Ed:* Fernando de Fuentes; *Art Dir:* Fernando A. Rivero; *Sound:* Joselito Rodríguez, Roberto



Rodríguez; *Sound Asst:* Ismael Rodríguez; *Titles:* Carlos Véjar hijo

**Cast:** Pepe Ortiz ("*Julio*" aka *José "Pepito" González, el Tigre*), Lupita Gallardo (*Dolores González*), Adria Delhort (*doña Lupita González*), Consuelo Segarra (*La Comancha*), Antonio R. Frausto (*El Rayado*), Alberto Miquel (*Padre Justo*), Joaquín Busquets (*Andrés*), Dolores Camarillo (*Caridad*), Rodolfo Calvo (*don Ramón*), Iris Blanco (*Carmen*), Enrique Cantalaúba (*El Coyote*), Julio Alarcón (*El Zopilote*), César Rendón (*El Cojo*), Victorio Blanco (*El Tuerto*), Miguel M. Delgado (*Pancho*), Max Langler (*bandit*), José Ignacio Rocha (*don Cosme*)

**Notes:** this is an very uneven film, with some very good bits, a number of odd aspects, and a hackneyed plot. Fernando de Fuentes is rightfully praised for other films he made in this era--*El prisionero 13*, *El compadre Mendoza*, *El fantasma del convento*--but *El Tigre de Yautepec* is certainly one of his lesser (and lesser-known) efforts.

I stumbled across this film on YouTube over a year ago, but it seems to have disappeared (or is hidden somehow--I seem to remember the listed title was rather cryptic); fortunately, I saved a copy, which is missing the opening credits but others appears to be complete.



"EL TIGRE DE YAUTEPEC"  
La producción que enorgullece al Cine Mexicano, con PEPE ORTIZ,  
LUPITA GALLARDO y dos mil personas más. (Una superproducción FESA)

The film opens with an excellent, long (over 5 minutes) sequence as "Los Chacales" led by El Coyote raid the town of Yautepec, Morelos in 1846. If the rest of the movie was as stylish as the beginning, *El Tigre de Yautepec* would be heralded as a masterpiece of early Mexican sound cinema, but that's sadly not the case. In any event, the scene of the raid is extremely well done, with dynamic editing, excellent camera setups and camera movement, and some impactful images. The outlaws kill many people, plunder the town, and abduct various residents. As they ride off, there are shots of their victims, such as a little child with its dead mother, a man who leaves a bloody handprint on a wall as he collapses, and so on.

Among the captives taken away are the husband of doña Lupita and their feisty young son Pepito. 20 years pass. Doña Lupita and her daughter Dolores have never heard of her husband and son again. Doña Lupita remembers Pepito's favourite game: his friends, including Andrés and Dolores, pretend to be a firing squad and Pepito is the brave condemned man. [Do you think this will be important later?]

Dolores, now grown, is courted by Andrés, who is leading the town's efforts at self-defense against a new group of bandits, "Los Plateados," led by El Tigre. Outside town, the outlaws assault a stagecoach. The driver shoots and wounds the masked El Tigre, and is in turn killed by the bandit's aide El Rayado. One of the passengers, a woman, tries to escape: she is pursued by a bandit, who rapes her. [We know he's up to no good because he licks his lips with an evil leer as he watches her sneak away.] Although the actual rape is shown in extreme closeup, it's clear what's happening. Then there's an abrupt cut to the Plateados riding off, and a shot of a man hanging from a tree limb, presumably the rapist, but no explanation is given.

The Plateados sing a song as they return to their hideout with their loot and captives, who'll be held for ransom. The prisoners are chained in a horrible, rat-infested dungeon and mistreated by El Cojo. Some die even though their families have paid for their freedom.

During *feria* day in Yautepec we're treated to another song, cockfights, etc. Dolores meets handsome "Julio" and a secret romance develops between them. She says she worries about his safety with the horrible Plateados and El Tigre at large.

"Julio," if you haven't guessed, is El Tigre. He returns to the hideout (two more songs), and learns El Tuerto doesn't agree with Tigre's decision not to raid Yautepec. El Tigre kills El Tuerto



in a machete duel. He also releases an old man that Dolores had mentioned, one of the prisoners from the stagecoach. [As the other prisoners moan, multiple images of their agonised faces are superimposed over El Tigre.]

"Julio" meets Dolores again and tells her "the man you love the most is the man you hate the most"--he's El Tigre. She rejects him and sends him away. The government finally sends weapons to Yautepec (hidden in firewood) so Andrés and the Committee of Public Safety can confront Los Plateados. Coincidentally, a friend of the burro driver has stumbled across the bandits' hideout. After a pitched battle [not shown], Los Plateados are defeated and El Tigre and what remains of his band are brought to Yautepec as prisoners. Dolores arranges with her servant Caridad to help "Julio" escape, but the wrong man is freed. El Tigre is sentenced to be shot.



La Comancha, an old woman who was El Tigre's adoptive mother, tells doña Lupita that El Tigre is the long-lost Pepito, proving it with a religious medallion the boy was wearing when he was abducted 20 years earlier. La Comancha then drops dead! Doña Lupita and Dolores



race to prevent the execution, but the large crowd prevents them from arriving until it's too late. [There is a rather abrupt cut--not a dissolve or superimposition--of little Pepito being "executed" by his playmates, just as the actual firing squad prepares to shoot.] José, positively identified by a birthmark on his chest, lies dead as his mother and sister/girlfriend weep.



The plot "twist" of a long-missing child revealed to be a main character (often a criminal of some sort) has been used numerous times in Hollywood cinema and elsewhere. It's not really much of a surprise anymore, but *El Tigre de*



*Yautepec* at least adds the perverse twist of a romance (including passionate kisses) between an unwitting brother and sister. [At least the brother and sister don't get married,

which is the shocking conclusion of 1970's *Secreto de confesión*, or get married and then commit suicide together as occurs in *La hija de nadie*, 1976.]

*El Tigre de Yautepec* has various plot elements which are reminiscent of Hollywood Westerns, including an outlaw band with a mysterious leader, a stagecoach robbery and so forth. There's no particular connection to Mexican history, although the setting is authentic enough (presumably a fair amount of the movie was shot in



Yautepec). The production values are fairly good, and de Fuentes' direction and editing are solid, although the opening scenes are (as noted earlier) by far the most effective and

stylish. The acting is variable: Consuelo Segarra takes the scenery-chewing prize as La Comancha, Adria Delhort is rather stiff and unconvincing. Pepe Ortiz (a *torero* who also acted in films) is adequate as El Tigre, although not particularly animated or charismatic; his wife Lupita Gallardo (I'm not sure if they were married at this time, but they were husband and wife later) isn't bad.

There are two main problems with *El Tigre de Yautepec*: the beginning is so good that it raises false expectations for the rest of the movie, and there are various aspects that disrupt the smooth flow of the narrative. The latter include the songs, the curious and distasteful rape scene, the dungeon scene, and some gaps in logic and

continuity. However, it's not a bad film and holds the viewer's interest throughout.

Trivia note: *El Tigre de Yautepec* began shooting at the beginning of September 1933 and was released by 22 November of that year, an incredibly quick turnaround time. This is even more impressive when looking at later Mexican films (especially the 1950s and 1960s), when it sometimes took years before a movie received a Mexico City playdate.



**La isla maldita** [The Accursed Island] (Distrimex, 1934) *Prod:* J. M. Hernández; *Dir:* Boris Maicon; *Scr:* Alejandro Galindo; *Photo:* Ross Fisher; *Music:* Max Urban; *Film Ed:* Aniceto Ortega; *Sound:* Rodríguez Hnos.

**Cast:** Luis G. Barreiro (*Carlos Treviño*), Mario Tenorio (*Javier de la Garza*), Carmen Torreblanca (*María de los Angeles Rubio*), José Eduardo Pérez (*Tripas*), Raúl de Anda (*Capt. Méndez*), Emilio Tuero (*singing voice only*), Antonio Quintana, José Ignacio Rocha (*guard*)

**Notes:** like Arcady Boytler, Boris Maicon was a Russian émigré to Mexico who made a handful of films, including one that made history, and then dropped out of the industry (Maicon died in 1946, whereas Boytler just stopped directing movies but lived for two decades after his last directorial effort). Boytler's most famous film was *La mujer del puerto*, while Maicon is remembered (barely) as the director of the first colour film made in Mexico, the short *Novillero* (1935).

*La isla maldita* was Maicon's first feature film, and runs less than an hour in length. It has some positive aspects, both in production values and film-making technique, but is not very satisfactory overall. The script--the first for future director Alejandro Galindo--is perfunctory and has many flaws, and the leading lady is not a satisfactory performer at all. There is also one bizarre facet of the sound recording, which--if the current print wasn't so clearly not restored--one might attribute to a new sound mix: during the first sequence in the grotto, "jungle bird" sounds are dubbed in so loudly that the dialogue of the characters is almost inaudible (and remember, this is supposed to be taking place underground).

Rather surprisingly, "The New York Times" reviewed *La isla maldita* on 2 December 1935. "H.T.S." wrote that

the movie was “A decidedly minor product of the Mexican studios” and “While this film is fairly good from the mechanical side, the action is slow and the attempt to create an atmosphere of suspense and horror falls flat.” Even this faint praise seems a little excessive.

Javier is a prisoner on a Mexican penal colony island; he is frustrated because he’s innocent. [That’s what they all say.] Fellow convict Carlos offers Javier the chance to join his escape plot: Carlos, Javier, Tripas and Gómez will sail away on a small boat that had washed up on the island and has been repaired by the inmates. Matters are



complicated by the arrival of Javier’s girlfriend María: she voluntarily comes to the island to marry him and live with him until his (10-year) sentence is complete. Javier weds María and she’ll accompany him in the escape.

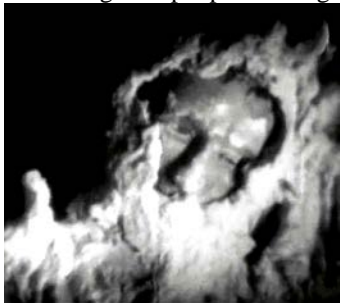
Ironically, the same night that the convicts sail away, the warden of the penal colony receives a telegram: Javier has been cleared of murder and is free to leave! Oops, he’s already gone, with 3 other prisoners who weren’t found innocent. The next morning, the warden sends a boatload of guards under the command of Capt. Martínez in pursuit of the fugitives.

Carlos and the others land their boat on another island, then make a long trek inland and build a hut. Are they



going to stay here forever? Why did they land in the first place--there is no indication they were running out of food or water, although that would have been a good excuse. That night, Tripas is left to stand

watch and the next morning he’s gone (only his harmonica remains); the boat is also missing, but footprints in the sand show it was dragged inland by numerous people. The remaining four people find a grotto, complete with



stalagmites and odd human-shaped statues. Javier cracks one open and a human corpse is revealed. [These are referred to as “mummies” by the others but it’s not clear why.] Carlos locates a rowboat, a chest of treasure, and a

parchment left by some Peruvian monks a long time ago: they reported that their number was mysteriously reduced each night.

Carlos and the others somehow get the rowboat out of the grotto and Carlos sets off to find help. [Javier says he

won’t risk María’s life by sailing in it, and Gómez also refuses to go.] After rowing around in the ocean for a while, Carlos is picked up Capt. Martínez; when the guard refuses to go to the island to rescue Javier and the others, Carlos holds him at gunpoint until he agrees.

Meanwhile, María and Gómez are dragged off in the middle of the night (only the hands of their abductors are shown); Javier wakes up alone. When Carlos and the



others arrive, Javier says he’s searched the whole island. Carlos says “Including the grotto?” and Javier admits he forgot. You forgot the cave that contains mummies, a rowboat, and a treasure chest? The one they all

visited just one day ago? They rush to the grotto and rescue María (Gómez is never seen again). As they’re leaving with the treasure chest, Carlos is struck by an arrow and dies. He’s buried on the island and everyone else departs.

The “mystery” of the Accursed Island appears to be just irritated indigenous people, who are never seen (only their hands) but clearly don’t like interlopers. There is no particular air of suspense or horror, even when people go missing, dead bodies are found encased in mud, and arrows fly through the air to kill people. Also, Carlos is the only person hit by an arrow, although Javier, María, Capt. Martínez and various guards remain standing around in the open (and then later walk away, carrying the treasure chest). Did the

natives only have one arrow? Or are they simply happy that the strangers are leaving, and if they take the treasure then perhaps no one else will come to the island any more



(even though nobody came there just to search for the treasure that no one knew about).

The production values of *La isla maldita* are surprisingly substantial, with lots of extras, an actual prison camp (or something made to look like that), guards who actually wear matching uniforms (and pith helmets), a guard tower with lights, and a fair amount of location shooting on the water and in a jungle. The grotto is apparently real as well, since constructing a set like that would have been prohibitively expensive, one imagines.

Macon’s direction isn’t wonderful, but it’s adequate enough. The real problems are the illogical script, clumsy dialogue, and Carmen Torreblanca’s non-performance. Half the time she refuses to look at Mario Tenorio’s eyes when she’s speaking to him, peering past him (at a blackboard with her lines written on it?) and uttering her dialogue in a monotone. Tenorio is adequate (and “sings” one song in a hilariously bad sequence after they arrive on



the *isla maldita*) while Luis G. Barreiro, Raúl de Anda, and José Eduardo Pérez (who would go on to a long career as a supporting actor--he's unrecognisable here) at least deliver their lines in a professional manner.

One trivia note: when the escape is discovered, the warden assembles the convicts and has the roll called to see who's missing. The man reading the list gives each prisoner's name and their nickname, including one called "La Coqueta," who is a stereotypical gay caricature.

Not without interest, but more laughable than exciting.



## One Padre, Two Gritos



**¡Viva México! (El grito de Dolores)\*** [Long Live Mexico! The Shout of Dolores] (Hispano Histórico Film, 1934) *Dir/Scr:* Miguel Contreras Torres; *Photo:* Ezequiel Carrasco; *Music:* Max Urban; *Asst Dir:* Antonio Guerrero Tello; *Film Ed:* José Marino; *Art Dir:* Mariano Rodríguez Granada; *Sound:* B.J. Kroger

\*re-release title *Alma insurgente* [Insurgent Soul]

**Cast:** Francisco Martínez (*don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*), Sara García (*doña Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez*), Alberto Martí (*Allende*), Joaquín Busquets (*Capt. Aldama*), José Cortés (*Corregidor Miguel Domínguez*), Rodolfo Navarrete (*Abasolo*), Paquita Estrada (*?Teresita*), Emma Roldán (*doña Rosario*), Alfonso Patiño Gómez, Jesús Melgarejo, Carlos Cancino hijo

**Notes:** Miguel Contreras Torres had been making films since the 1920s and would continue to do so until the early 1960s, but *¡Viva México!* is not one of his better efforts. Although the version I have seen is a re-release (and possibly cut) version of such poor quality that some images are barely visible on the screen, there are major flaws which were obviously in the original version as well: the film resembles a historical pageant, with famous names from Mexican history walking into a scene, declaiming patriotically, and then the scene ends. Since the film is

based on actual events, there isn't any suspense or uncertainty, and neither is there much in the way of character development or filmic technique (until the last few minutes of the movie).

The only major fictional sections (presumably) are brief: Paquita loves Pedro, and Padre Hidalgo promises to officiate at their wedding, which is scheduled for...wait for it...15 September 1810. When the rebellion begins, Pedro goes off to fight for Mexico's independence and is killed. Paquita's mother *doña Rosario*, previously seen to be a fervent adherent to Hidalgo's cause, consoles her daughter, saying Pedro died so Mexico could be free. The total screen time of all the *Teresita-Pedro* footage is probably less than 5 minutes. The rest of the film alternates between scenes of Padre Hidalgo and his conspirators, notably military officers Abasolo, Arias, Allende and Aldama (I guess he started recruiting at the top of an alphabetical list of soldiers), and a few sections featuring *La Corregidora* and her husband, also independence plotters.

*¡Viva México!* begins in 1808, with stock footage depicting Napoleon's invasion of Spain, which leads to the weakening of Spain's grasp on its New World colonies. In Mexico, Padre Hidalgo is a benevolent patriarch to the



people in the town of Dolores (state of Guanajuato), where they make pottery, grow grapes for wine, and carry out other useful occupations. He also imbues them with the

desire to be free of foreign domination. Hidalgo is the center of a group that eventually schedules an uprising against Spain for the beginning of October 1810.

However, one civilian plotter and military officer Arias denounce Hidalgo to the viceroy's government. Thanks to the quick thinking of *doña Josefa*, wife of the *corregidor* (a government official) of Querétaro, the independence group is warned. Padre Hidalgo moves up the date of the beginning of the revolt, and early on 16 September issues the *grito* (cry or shout) in front of his church. He asks his assembled parishioners if they want to be slaves of the French or free men. The revolt against Spain begins.

As "Mexicanos al grito de guerra" (the Mexican national anthem, in reality not written until decades later)

is heard on the soundtrack, there is a long montage sequence showing Mexicans taking up arms and fighting for their freedom, followed by images of



statues of Simón Bolívar, José de San Martín, José Martí,

George Washington (all labeled), as well as the Cuauhtémoc and Angel of Independence statues in Mexico City, with a monument to Hidalgo shown last.

There are also two rather odd printed titles at the end of the movie. One reads "Spain and Latin America will live free, united spiritually by *la raza* [race] and language." The second says "Spain loses its colonies in America but won the heart and respect of Latin America." These are somewhat curious, perhaps inserted to reinforce the idea--which is stated several times in earlier dialogue--that Spain itself wasn't free in 1810 (having been occupied by France), so the Spanish people weren't necessarily to blame for oppression and racial discrimination in Mexico. This isn't entirely historically accurate, but it may have been politically correct at the time the film was made (or perhaps it's just how Miguel Contreras Torres felt).

*¡Viva México!* started shooting in July 1934 and was completed in time for its Mexico City premiere on 15 September 1934, a rather amazing feat. Emilio García Riera indicates the film was also shown at this time in Los Angeles, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

*¡Viva México!* was probably made on a relatively low



budget. Most of the scenes are shot either on location (which is good) or cramped sets (not so good). The opening and

closing battle scenes are, respectively, stock footage (source unknown, although I wouldn't put it past Contreras Torres to have used scenes from Abel Gance's *Napoleon*) and impressionistic/cheap (lots of closeups, quick cuts, etc., to hide the fact that you only see a handful of people at a time). The biggest crowd appears in the *grito* scene, apparently filmed outside a colonial-era church (possibly Hidalgo's actual church in Dolores); probably most of the local population were convinced to stand around and cheer as Hidalgo makes his speech.

Francisco "Paco" Martínez does a good job as Hidalgo, conveying his absolute dedication to freedom, as well as his dedication to the betterment of his parishioners (and,

by extension, to the poor people of Mexico).

Martínez appeared in a fair number of Mexican movies in this era, mostly in minor roles as a feisty senior citizen. Curiously, in *La Virgen que forjó una patria* (1942), which relates the story of Mexico's war for independence, Paco



Martínez has a small supporting part. The story of Hidalgo and Mexico's fight for independence was also shown in a

very early Mexican film, *1810 o los libertadores de México* (1916), with Alfredo Varela Senior as Hidalgo.

The other main acting role in *¡Viva México!* goes to Sara García as doña Josefa and she's fine, although she has much less screen time than Martínez. Other familiar faces include Emma Roldán, Alberto Martí (usually a villain, here the heroic Allende), and Joaquín Busquets.



**La Virgen que forjó una patria** [The Virgin That Forged a Nation] (Films Mundiales, 1942) *Prod:* Agustín J. Fink; *Assoc Prod:* Emilio Gómez Muriel; *Dir:* Julio Bracho; *Scr:* Julio Bracho, René Capistrán Garza; *Photo:* Gabriel Figueroa; *Music:* Miguel Bernal Jiménez; *Prod Mgr:* Felipe Subervielle; *Prod Chief:* Armando Espinosa; *Asst Dir:* Felipe Palomino; *Film Ed:* Jorge Bustos; *Art Dir:* Jorge Fernández; *Designs:* Carlos González; *Decor:* Felipe Subervielle; *Sound:* Jesús González, Howard Randall; *Makeup:* Ana Guerrero

**Cast:** 1528/1531 sequences: Ramon Novarro (*Juan Diego*), Domingo Soler (*Fray Martín*), Gloria Marín (*Xochiquiáuit*), Paco Fuentes (*Pedro de Alonso*), Felipe Montoya (*Xiunel*), Alberto Galán (*Fray Juan de Zumárraga*), Manuel Pozos (*Bernardino*), Mario Gil (*son of Bernardino*), José Morcillo (*Nuño de Guzmán*), Octavio Martínez (*Delgadillo*), Margarita Cortés (*Juan Diego's wife*), José Elías Moreno (*Capitán Ordaz*), Armando Velasco (*first monk*), Humberto Rodríguez (*second monk*), Jesús Valero (*Carlos V*), Alfredo Varela padre (*leader in Atzacapotzalco*), Paco Martínez (*Vasco de Quiroga*), Mercedes Ferriz (*nursemaid*), Manuel Dondé (*Aztec man*), Ignacio Peón (*indigenous man*), Aurora Ruiz (*indigenous woman*)

**1810 sequences:** Julio Villarreal (*Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla*), Ernesto Alonso (*Capt. Ignacio Allende*), Víctor Urruchúa (*Capt. Juan Aldama*), Fanny Schiller (*Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez*), Joaquín Coss (*Corregidor de Querétaro*), Salvador Quiroz (*Intendente Riano*), Amalia Ferriz (*Sra. Fernández del Rincón*), Manuel Arvide (*Licenciado Lazo*), Edmundo Espino (*Juan Garrido*),



Ricardo Montalbán (*soldier who rides to alert conspirators*), Consuelo Monteagudo (*party guest*), Roberto Cañedo, Mariano Requena

**Notes:** *La Virgen que forjó una patria* is a rather awkward mashup of two different stories, the beginning of Mexico's fight for independence in 1810, and the Virgin of Guadalupe tale from 1831. The script ties them together by (a) having Padre Hidalgo choose the image of the Virgin for his independence banner and (b) explaining that Mexico's rebellion against Spain in 1810 was the culmination of centuries of foreign domination of Mexico. This doesn't entirely work, but the film is consistently entertaining and well-made nonetheless.

In September 1810, Padre Hidalgo is one of the leaders of the clandestine independence movement in Mexico. He



explains to Capt. Allende how Moctezuma and Hernán Cortés were just the "prologue," but the true clash between native Mexicans and the Spanish *conquistadores*

occurred a few years later, in 1528. [Flashback] Pedro de Alonso and other *encomenderos* (people rewarded by the Crown with a sort of franchise that allowed them to extract tribute or labour from indigenous peoples in a prescribed area) abuse the indigenous inhabitants, treating them as slaves (Alonso even has them branded on the forehead with a stylised "A"). They seize upon a statement by King Carlos V that the *indios* are not capable of reason, so they are essentially "beasts." This attitude is opposed by religious figures such as Fray Martín. He befriends an *indio* and baptises him Juan Diego.

Aztec prince Xiunel, tired of the repeated abuses of the *encomienda* system, plans to massacre all whites in Mexico, coordinating his actions with others in Atzacapotzalco. Juan Diego learns that Pedro de Alonso is aware of



the plot, and that Atzacapotzalco will not participate, so he informs Fray Martín. To save the *indios*, Fray Martín arranges to have Xiunel arrested: he'll be kept safe in a convent instead of being executed. Before he goes into captivity, Xiunel strangles his young son to spare him a life of slavery. Xiunel himself is later murdered in the convent by Pedro de Alonso's men, but the ruling Spanish council won't admit the testimony of Fray Martín or Juan Diego.

Meanwhile, Pedro de Alonso's Aztec mistress Xochiquiáui gives birth to a young son, who has a

birthmark on his forehead that is identical to the "A" branded on his father's slaves. Pedro goes mad when he sees this, and brands himself, going blind as a result.

Fray Martín travels to Spain and convinces Carlos V to declare *indios* human beings, so they'll be treated better and allowed to convert to Christianity. However, Fray Martín dies on the return voyage to Mexico. [end of flashback]

Back in 1810, Padre Hidalgo reads from a Spanish translation of a book by an indigenous historian, telling what happened next to Juan Diego, in 1831...[flashback]

The aged Bernardino falls ill and asks his nephew Juan Diego to bring back a priest from town to hear his confession. On his way, Juan Diego passes the hill of Tepeyac and sees a vision of the Virgin Mary. She says his uncle will be fine, and tells Juan Diego to instruct Fray Juan de Zumárraga, the bishop of Mexico, to build a



church on the hill. The bishop thinks Juan Diego may have been dreaming, and asks for a sign. The Virgin Mary causes a rose bush to bloom in winter, tells Juan Diego to collect the blossoms and take them to the bishop. When Juan Diego spills the roses on the floor, his cloak miraculously features an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe. [end flashback]

Padre Hidalgo learns the independence plot has been betrayed. He decides to start the rebellion right away, unfurling his banner and exhorting his followers to fight for their freedom.

*La Virgen que forjó una patria* was the second Mexican film of 1942 to tell the Juan Diego/Virgin of Guadalupe story: the other was *La Virgen morena*, with José Luis Jiménez as Juan Diego; there was also a 1917 version (*Tepeyac (El milagro de Tepeyac)*), and *La Virgen de Guadalupe* (1976).

Julio Villareal's Padre Hidalgo is considerably younger, more vigorous, and more personable than Paco Martínez in *¡Viva México!* Martínez's Hidalgo spends a fair amount of time with his indigenous parishioners, and his lengthy version of the *Grito* is heard by a large crowd of the common people, whereas Villareal's Hidalgo frequently consorts with the upper class—he's showing playing cards with a group of wealthy women, and playing chess with the Corregidor—and his *Grito* is much shorter (only about

three lines!) and is delivered to a small crowd of his men in a room (not outside, in front of a church).

The production values of *La Virgen que forjó una patria* are fine. Although there are no large crowds or



extensive action scenes, the photography, set designs, costumes, etc., are slick and professional and make the film look more expensive than it probably was. There are a few mildly dodgy special effects in the Virgin of Guadalupe scenes, but they're not that bad. The Virgin (played by an unidentified young woman) speaks to Juan Diego, but while the

audience hears her voice, she is never shown speaking (we always see Juan Diego's reaction): in all of her closeups she remains still. In one of his later visits to Tepeyac, Juan Diego is followed by two (comic relief) monks, suspicious of his motivation. They see Juan Diego speaking but can't see the Virgin Mary; then Juan Diego "disappears" (first he's a transparent superimposition, then vanishes entirely) and reappears further down the hill.

The performances in the 1810 sequences are satisfactory, although no one has much to do aside from Villareal as Hidalgo. Fanny Schiller plays *La Corregidora*, but has less screen time than Sara García in *¡Viva México!* and doesn't make much of an impression.

In the 1528/1531 footage the film doesn't concentrate entirely on Juan Diego, as one might expect. Former Hollywood star Ramón Novarro (born in Mexico, this was his first and only Mexican movie role), who was in his 40s when the film was made, looks much younger (and in some shots his

resemblance to Diego Luna is striking). He's good as Juan Diego, not playing the character as an ingenuous *indio* stereotype, but has relatively little serious dramatic acting to do. Gloria



Marín gets the glamour treatment as Pedro de Alonso's long-suffering mistress, and that's about the extent of her performance: being long-suffering. Domingo Soler—who would later play another Mexican priest involved in the independence struggle in *El Padre Morelos* and *El Rayo del sur* in 1942-43—has more acting to do as the saintly Fray Martín, and Paco Fuentes chews the scenery violently as Pedro de Alonso. Also of note is Felipe Montoya,

usually relegated to supporting roles, as Aztec prince Xiunel.

Not entirely satisfactory due to its bifurcated narrative structure, *La Virgen que forjó una patria* is still a very good movie, consistently entertaining and well-made.



## Derbez Pays His Dues

Eugenio Derbez is one of the biggest stars in Mexico today, thanks to a series of popular television shows and movies. The latter include *How to Be a Latin Lover* and *No se aceptan devoluciones* (aka *Instructions Not Included*). His performing career dates back to the 1980s, but he may or may not want to remember his early appearances in a string of late *sexy-comedies*: *Hembra o macho*, *Fotógrafo de modelos*, *Trasplante a la mexicana*, as well as the tamer comedies *Más vale amada que quemada* and *Soy hombre y que*.



### Hembra o macho [Woman or Man] (Cin.

Calderón,  
©1990) Prod:  
Guillermo  
Calderón Stell;  
Dir: Víctor  
Manuel  
Castro; Scr:  
Lic. Francisco  
Cavazos,  
Leandro  
Espinosa;  
Story: Lic.  
Francisco  
Cavazos;  
Photo: Raúl  
Domínguez  
Cervantes;  
Music: Pedro  
Plascencia  
Salinas; Prod  
Mgr: Ricardo  
Gutiérrez; Asst  
Dir: Lourdes



Álvarez; Film Ed: Jorge Peña; Camera Op: Agustín Maza Quiroz; Choreog/Costumes: Los Imperio; Makeup: Guillermina Oropeza Guzmán; Sound Op: Rogelio Pichardo Medrano; Union STIC

**Cast:** Alfonso Zayas (*Luis*), Maribel Fernández (*La Pelangocha*"), Lorena Herrera (*"Marcelo Suárez"*), César Bono (*Chema Moncada*), Alfredo Solares (*Dr. Garduño*), Roberto Cañedo (*Dr. Evaristo Cepeda*), Humberto Elizondo (*Roberto*), Ivonne Govea (*agent*), Eva Garbo (*Roberto's wife Bárbara*), Roberto Cobo (*"Cobitos"* (*don Camelito*), Eduardon Liñán (*don Genaro*), Lizbeth Olivier (*Luis's lover*), Eugenio Derbez (*Carmelo Rosas*), Luis Enrique Cano (*Ramón*), Billy Morton (*Otelo*), María Elena Martínez, Miguel Ángel Basurto, Teresita Berdejo, Eduardo Baños, Gerardo Rodríguez, Ernesto Irigoyen, Ana Elena Ávila, José Aguilar, Guadalupe Rodríguez, Daisy



Sánchez, Gonzalo Rosas, Sharon Aceves, Rosa Lina Dorantes, Michel Dubois, Lupita Perullero (*woman in cabaret with don Camelito*)

**Notes:** *Hembra o macho* is not a bad film, but it is far from a good one. The film has one main plot, one substantial sub-plot, two minor sub-plots, four musical numbers, and lots of material in dubious taste, even given the time & place it was made.

The main plot: nightclub owner don Genaro is perturbed when Marcelo, half of the transvestite act “Frankie y Marcelo,” quits. Genaro convinces one of the (female) dancers in the show to impersonate Marcelo, i.e., be a woman pretending to be a man playing a woman. She agrees, although it means she has to pretend to be a gay man in her daily life as well.

The premise dates back to *Viktor und Viktoria* (1933, later remade as *Victor/Victoria* in 1982) and requires a certain amount of willing suspension of disbelief. Certainly Lorena Herrera as “Marcelo” doesn’t look much like a man, although she wears baggy clothes and a



newsboy-cap as her daily disguise.

When “Marcelo” gets in a minor traffic accident, Genaro asks lawyer Luis to handle the case. The homophobic Luis does, then finds himself oddly attracted to “Marcelo.” He goes to the nightclub with his friends Chema and Garduño, but when—as part of the act—“Marcelo” kisses him, Luis becomes angry and violent. “Marcelo” decides to make him fall in love with her in revenge. Luis sees a psychiatrist and learns latent homosexuality can emerge later in life. He has a dream in which he and his friends become drag queens and Luis is raped by a man. However, Luis discovers “Marcelo” is really a woman, and turns the tables on her by pretending he is now gay. At the end, Luis reveals he’s straight and “Marcelo” confesses she’s a woman, and they fall in love.



*Hembra o macho* is loaded with stereotypical images of gays and often offensive rhetoric (the word *joto*--a slur similar to “fag”--is repeatedly used). In one scene, three representatives of a gay union visit Luis to protest his repeated disruptions of the nightclub show (he attends several times in disguise and gets into a brawl each time). The name of their group, abbreviated, is “SIDA” (the

Spanish acronym for AIDS). Ironically, the “actual” gays in the film (that is, not people pretending like Luis and “Marcelo”) are not portrayed negatively (aside from effeminate mannerisms), and Luis’s rabid homophobia--even before he meets “Marcelo”--is unpleasant.

The scenes between Luis and psychiatrist Dr. Cepeda are interesting if not wholly consistent. Cepeda tells Luis that sexual orientation is determined at birth and no one “becomes” gay suddenly. He notes that some people repress their gayness and often display homophobia as a result. Luis can’t be “cured” of being gay and Cepeda urges him to make peace with his true nature. However, Cepeda later summons Luis and says (*deus ex machina*) he just read an article that claims straight men who are sexually obsessed with a gay man can be “cured” by viewing the genitalia of the object of their obsession; he urges Luis to test this on “Marcelo.” Luis peeks into the dressing room and learns “Marcelo” is a woman (even though she only strips to her underwear).

The major sub-plot is also disturbing. Luis’s friend Chema is a *mandilón* (hen-pecked), whose wife is a *norteña* politician, complete with a leather jacket, cowboy hat, and pistol. The “humour” in their scenes is derived from Chema assuming the female role of homemaker, and his wife’s violent abuse of him. This is never really funny and actually horrifying at times, with virtually no witty aspects to lighten the effect. Switching genders doesn’t make spousal abuse acceptable or amusing.



The two minor sub-plots are also only peripherally related to the main story. In the first, Luis’s other friend Dr. Garduño is summoned to the home of his old pal Roberto. Roberto’s wife suffers from sonambulism and kleptomania: each night she sleepwalks and steals things, putting them in her bed. The next day Roberto has to return the stolen merchandise. Garduño says he can help. At midnight, Roberto’s wife Bárbara comes downstairs in a trance, steals Garduño’s doctor bag, coat, and pants. Each time, Roberto says “don’t worry, I’ll return it to you tomorrow.” However, when Bárbara grabs Garduño to take him up to her bedroom, Roberto protests. Garduño: “I’ll return her to you tomorrow!”

This is basically a *carpa* skit interpolated into the movie for no rational reason, and probably consumes 15% of the total running time (over the two scenes). While the

byplay between Roberto and Garduño is mildly amusing, the pacing of the first section--where Roberto explains the problem--is hampered terribly by the insertion of repeated shots of Roberto's sexy sister-in-law peeking at the two men and "reacting" to their wacky antics and dialogue.

The second sub-plot harkens back to earlier Calderón *sexy comedies* like *Burlesque*. The nightclub where "Marcelo" works has a wealthy senior citizen client, don Camelito. He shows up periodically to drink milk and chat up the various bargirls. These two sub-plots have no thematic relation to the main plot.

*Hembra o macho* features three rather long scenes of the "Frankie y Marcelo" show, with a fair number of male



and female dancers, and some decent costumes and choreography. They're professional enough, but go on too long, especially since their basic purpose is to set up Luis's subsequent disruption of the show: first, because he's offended by the kiss of "Marcelo" and later because he's jealous of

"her" attentions to other men in the audience. There is another, very odd musical number in which Luis, Garduño, and Chema attend a costume party for transvestites and sing a "funny" song. The other guests are portrayed sympathetically, except for a large black man (not in drag) who subsequently rapes Luis (who wakes up to discover it's all a dream).

The cast is satisfactory. Alfonso Zayas gets to do a bit of (pun not intended) "straight" acting but also has plenty



of opportunity for his usual mugging and verbal antics. He dresses in drag once, then wears an odd wig/beard combo and uses a Cuban accent, and later pretends to be an Arab sheik or something, sporting an enormous fake

nose. Lorena Herrera is adequate and attractive, and it's nice to see Roberto Cañedo and Ivonne Govea, although the latter doesn't have much to do. César Bono and Alfredo "Pelón" Solares do their usual *shtick*, while Maribel Fernández is appropriately nasty and brutal as the *diputada*. Eugenio Derbez has an early, one-scene role as one of the effeminate union reps--he's accompanied by Luis Ernest Cano, who plays Derbez's gay lover in *Trasplante a la mexicana* (they had both appeared in the TV series "Cachún cachún ra ra!!" in the early '80s). Oddly enough, Eduardo Liñán is not billed as don Genaro, nor is Lizbeth Olivier, who has the only nude scene in the entire movie.



**Trasplante a la mexicana\*** [Transplant, Mexican-Style] (Alianza Cinematografica-Cinematografica del Prado-Hermes Films, ©1990) *Exec Prod*: Abraham Cherem; *Prod*: Carlos Vasallo; *Dir*: Víctor Manuel Castro; *Scr*: Víctor Manuel "Güero" Castro; *Photo*: Raúl Domínguez; *Music*: Alejandro Giacomán; *Prod Mgr*: Pablo Buelna; *Asst Dir*: Lourdes Álvarez; *Film Ed*: Jorge Peña; *Art Dir*: Alejandro Ayala, Gerardo Hernández; *Makeup*: Angelina Chavolla [sic? aka Chagoya?]; *Cam Op*: Agustín Meza; *Re-rec*: Ricardo Saldívar; *Sound Engin*: Guillermo Carrasco [sic]; *Action Coord*: Margot Gavilondo; *Choreog*: Enrique Imperio; *Union*: STIC

\* end credits list title as *Trasplante a la mexicana*

**Cast**: Alfonso Zayas (*El Gato*), Lina Santos (*Dr. Erika Hoffman*), Bruno Rey (*Julio*), Eugenio Derbez (*Eugenio*), Jackeline [sic] Castro (*Rigoberta Parada* [billed as *Roberta*]), Adriana Rojas (*Alicia*), Óscar Moreli [sic] (*Javier "Tres Guerras"*), Ramón Menéndez (*Cmdte. Farias*), Michelle Dubois (*Michelle*), Lizbeth Olivier (*Mónica Farias*), Luis Ernesto Cano (*Luis*), Eva Garbo (*Elena*), Víctor Manuel "Güero" Castro (*Perrorro*), Ángel Rodríguez "Chanate" (*killer #1*), Sammy Villanueva "Sammy" (*killer #2*), Sharo Aceves (*maid*), José Luis Carol (*Alfonso*), Fidel Garriga (*Sr. Parada*), Charlie Hauptvogel (*Eduardo*), Teresa Pave (*nurse #1*), Lucha Palacio [sic] (*Hortencia*), Guillermo Inclán (*Lic. Alcocer*), Lupita Adriana (*reporter*), José L[uis] Barraza (*chauffeur*), Raúl Adalid (*Dr. Erazo*), Adrián Gómez (*doctor #1*), Lupita Perullero (*auctioneer*), Guillermo Von Son (*reporter*), Adolfo Cabrera (*emcee*), Perfecto González "Peluche" (*jailer #1*), Chalito Rosas (*jailer #2*); nurses: Lilian Davis, Genaro Aguirre, Flavio Peniche; dancers: Jamie Lobato, Claudio Toledo, Rubén Flores, Leticia Diego, José Rivera, Margarita Sava, Amador Rosas, Verónica Mota



**Notes:** *Trasplante a la mexicana* is an odd and at times unpleasant film (though it also has some amusing bits). Once again, rape is portrayed as funny, gays are stereotyped outrageously, and we even get a little *gringo* (well, in this case *gringa*) bashing.

El Gato is apparently a combination rapist-gigolo, who sexually assaults women (sometimes he arrives by appointment!), but his superb sexual technique leaves his victims happy. Meanwhile, rich businessman Julio wants his son Eugenio to marry Rigoberta, the daughter of the even more wealthy Sr. Parada. However, Eugenio is a happy homosexual with a devoted partner, Luis. Rigoberta is understandably

reluctant to marry Eugenio. Julio contacts *gringa* doctor Hoffman, who has had success with “sexual”

transplants (more specifically, as we later learn, testicular transplants). She says a “super potent” donor has to be found before Eugenio can undergo the operation.

El Gato is caught having sex with underage Mónica, the daughter of police commander Farias, and is arrested for rape. Alfonso and Eduardo, the husbands of two of El Gato’s “victims,” see a newspaper story about a large reward for a testicular donor, and want El Gato to be the one. They arrange for Elena (one of their wives) to have a conjugal visit (despite the fact that El Gato has had sex with “48” women in his cell, he’s taken to the conjugal visit room this time) and he leaves wearing her clothes. As he exits the jail, he’s abducted and taken to the hospital, where Dr. Hoffman swaps Gato’s large testicles for Eugenio’s smaller pair.

El Gato leaves, but he’s now a flaming homosexual stereotype. He and Eugenio’s former boyfriend Luis team up. El Gato opens a sidewalk foodstand, but Tres Guerras kidnaps him for some unclear purpose: El Gato is put in a room with various other men, and it seems Tres Guerras is a pimp. However, the next time we see El Gato--now



calling himself “Minina” (Pussycat)--he’s in drag as the star of a nightclub revue! (And Tres Guerras is sitting at a table with a black eye--what?)

Mónica tells her father that El Gato didn’t rape her: she invited him to her room, and now she loves him. They learn what has happened to El Gato, and Mónica volunteers her father as the donor for a new operation! Meanwhile, Eugenio awakes from the operation and rapes 3 nurses, ha ha? He becomes an uncontrollable womaniser and marries Rigoberta (immediately after the ceremony, he gropes one of the guests).

However, for unexplained reasons, on his wedding night Eugenio suddenly has a seizure and turns gay again. El Gato regains his original sexual orientation as well, and will marry Mónica.

There are some interesting similarities (and differences) between *Trasplante a la mexicana* and *Hembra o macho*. In both movies Alfonso Zayas plays a straight man who becomes gay (even though in the latter film it’s just in a dream). In



*Trasplante...* he’s not homophobic but is over-sexed, whereas in *Hembra o macho* he apparently has a normal heterosexual

sex life (we only see him with one partner) but is rabidly homophobic. El Gato, after his operation, doesn’t regret his sudden change, even embracing it, whereas Luis struggles against his apparent homosexual urges. Both films contain outrageously stereotyped caricatures of gays, but in *Hembra o macho* these are more in passing, whereas Eugenio in *Trasplante a la mexicana* is a major character with substantial screen time.

*Trasplante a la mexicana* actually depicts its gay characters in a more positive light than the heterosexuals. Eugenio is flamingly gay (although he admits at one point he’s a virgin) but isn’t malicious, is devoted to his boyfriend Luis, and has a positive outlook on life. When he becomes

hetero, Eugenio turns into an animalistic rapist and unfaithful womaniser. The hetero version of El Gato is technically a rapist and certainly a



womaniser who says he’ll never get married; Minina, on the other hand, is an inoffensive fellow who uses his savings to become a food vendor and later (in drag) a flamboyant entertainer.

The performances in *Trasplante a la mexicana* are generally satisfactory. Zayas is an old pro and while El Gato viewed objectively is not a positive character, he’s somewhat charming and witty, while Minina is not quite as over the top as one might expect. Eugenio Derbez has a very substantial role and is animated and amusing most of the time. Even the post-op rape scene tries to mitigate its inherently offensive nature by having Derbez act like a monkey and pull goofy faces (the sequence is shot in fast-motion to make it even more “humourous”). Jacqueline Castro is funny at times, putting on a hilarious accent, while Lizbeth Olivier (in a larger than usual role) is convincing.

Lina Santos has a thick accent as the *gringa* Dr. Hoffman (although her nationality isn't especially relevant to the plot) and is relegated mostly to a subsidiary expository role. Santos didn't do nudity, so her "sex" scene with El Gato (before the operation, to test his potency) has her clad in lingerie. In one bizarre, "it's in the script" scene, Mónica and her father go to see Dr. Hoffman to ask her to reverse El Gato's operation. Except, they note, El Gato escaped from jail and they don't know where he is. Dr. Hoffman says "I track all of my patients" and miraculously knows in which nightclub El Gato (as Minina) is now performing!

The production values and direction of *Trasplante a la mexicana* are fine. Most of the film was shot on location, including a real hospital and a real jail! The pacing is satisfactory and aside from the jarring jump mentioned above--going from Minina as the prisoner of Tres Guerras to Minina as a cabaret star--the film sticks to the narrative without unnecessary deviations or interpolations.



### Silly Superheroes



**Metiche y encajoso** [Meddler & Creep] (Zyanya Prods., 1988) *Dir.*: Alejandro Todd; *Scr.*: Óscar Fentanes, Juan Garrido; *Photo*: Fernando Colín; *Music*: Marcos Lizama; *Songs*: Armando Ramírez; *Prod Mgr*: Javier García Mata; *Asst Dir*: Rubén González; *Film Ed*: Enrique Puente Portillo; *Camera Op*: José Luis Lemus; *Makeup*: Graciela Muñoz; *Sound Ed*: Enrique Puente Jr.; *Stunts*: Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, Fidel Abrego, José Luis Quintana, Margot Gavilondo; *Union*: STIC

**Cast**: Luis de Alba (*El Chido*), Pedro Pérez), Óscar Fentanes (*Insp. Olguín*; *doña Rosita Olguín*), Charly Valentino (*Chico Damián*), Jorge Arvizu "El Tata" (*Maestro Toyito*), Edna Bolkán (*Irma*), César Bono (*Próculo*), Vitola [*Famie Kaufman*] (*Toyito's wife*), Carlos Yustis (*Quique Rosas*), Diana Golden (*Toyito's daughter*), Marisol Cervantes (*Sra. Colín*), Carlos Terán, Lizbeth Olivier (*topless party guest*), Bernabé Palma (*gang member*), Adriana Rojas, César Valdés, Lena Jiménez, Angélica Ramírez, José Luis Jiménez, José Luis Carol (*ambassador*), Peluche [Perfecto González], José Luis Cordero "Pocholo" (*Cmdte. Lozano*), Armando Ramírez (*gang member*)

**Notes**: *Metiche y encajoso* was a fairly early example of the superhero-spoofs which occurred with some frequency in late '80s-early '90s Mexican cinema (including *videohomes*). Prior to this, a handful of films had addressed this theme--*El Águila descalza*, *Santo vs. Capulina*--but in the space of a few years at the end of the '80s we saw *Metiche y encajoso*, *Las travesuras del Super-Chido*, *El Lambiscón Verde*, *Las caguamas ninja*, *La verdadera historia de Barman y Droguín*, *Mister Barrio*, etc.

*Metiche y encajoso* is slightly more coherent than many of its successors, with a fairly linear narrative, but the two "superheroes" El Chile and El Mole (a) aren't the main focus of the plot, (b) have no "origin story" and (certainly) no super-powers (but somehow have come into possession of a "Knight-Rider"-esque intelligent, talking car; they also have their own theme song). So the film is not really a "superhero spoof," but rather a comedy movie that includes two costumed heroes as part of its ensemble cast. [It's also not a *sexy-comedy* by any stretch, since sexual themes are not central to the plot and there are only 3 very brief bits of nudity.]

International spy The Woman in Black and gangster Chico Damián collaborate to steal the two keys necessary to unlock a powerful secret device. Inspector Olguín and his crew of operatives--effeminate Quique, Japanese martial artist Toyito, *chilango* El Chido, and nerdy Próculo--try to capture the criminals and retrieve the keys. They are periodically aided by masked\* superheroes El Chile and El Mole (actually El Chido and Próculo in disguise) and their supercar El Chilaquí. Later, El Chido's identical twin Pedro--they were separated at birth and Pedro grew up in the provinces--gets a job with the police as well. Since the police agents and the two superheroes are incompetent, masked hero La Sombra Blanca has to step in and rescue them numerous times.

\*[El Chile and El Mole actually wear sunglasses as "masks." And, contrary to what the poster art shows, they both wear folded-newspaper "hats."]

Chico Damián is compelled to turn his key over to the police. To trap The Woman in Black, a costume party is held at the residence of the ambassador of the foreign country that possesses the super device. The Woman in Black steals the device but is captured by



La Sombra Blanca. The female spy is revealed to be Irma, a woman Pedro had briefly met earlier; the Sombra is the paunchy Pedro. The device to ensure "world peace" is opened with the keys and a dove flies out. The End.

This synopsis makes *Metiche y encajoso* seem more linear than it really is. There are numerous marginally-relevant comedy sequences, including a long diversion with Pedro as a plumber (before he joins the police force), numerous confrontations between El Chile and El Mole and Chico's gang, a scene in a nightclub, a comic-sexy



confrontation between El Chido and a criminal's wife, and so on. Some of these are brief "blackout gags" in which a well-worn joke is told, while others are somewhat longer.

Unlike, say *El Lambiscón Verde*, which is never funny, there are some amusing bits in *Metiche y encajoso*. In one scene, Toyito is giving a demonstration in his martial arts dojo and accidentally slices off the arm of one of his



students! He says it was *sin querer* (I didn't mean it) and the victim says, "Well, if that's the case, I forgive you." In the "plumbing" scene (which features 2 of the 3 brief bits of nudity in the movie), Pedro trots out an old

joke about the Mexican towns of Ojotepic, Boca del Río, and Culiacán, making a pun on the body parts *ojo* (eye), *boca* (mouth) and (the punchline, although he doesn't say it) *culo* (ass). Pedro also gets a woman drunk, dresses her up in a ludicrous costume including a gigantic *sombrero* and compliments her by saying "you look like a female Ignacio López Tarso."

The sequences featuring El Chile and El Mole could have been better, but there are some running gags that are mildly funny. Their car "El Chilaquil" has a mind of its own, and often leaves them stranded, driving off to chat up another attractive (presumably female) vehicle. In one scene, the two heroes bravely confront a gang member, are



still defiant but less confident when a second thug appears, but are nonplussed when 3 more gangsters join the fray. Also, Chico's gang is called "Los violadores de Papantla" [The Rapists of Papantla, although they

don't rape anyone, at least in this movie]: this is a pun on the *voladores de Papantla*, indigenous people who perform an act requiring them to launch themselves from the top of a tall pole, "flying" through the air via ropes attached to the pole.

The production values of *Metiche y encajoso* are satisfactory, although the only production "frill" seems to have been the refurbishment of El Chilaquil, a vintage car



that has been painted and tricked out to appear high-tech (although the vehicle doesn't really do anything special). Other than one double-exposure early in the movie as Pedro and El Chido sit on a park bench and converse, there are no special effects to speak of, and the majority of the film appears

to have been shot on location. The film begins with a fourth-wall breaking sequence introducing the various performers, as well as cinematographer Fernando Colín and director Alejandro Todd.

The performances are generally good, within the narrow confines of this type of comedy. Luis de Alba plays a dual role distinguished mostly by costume and catch-phrase (Pedro repeatedly insists "I'm a *provinciano*" and deprecates *chilangos*): otherwise the two twin brothers are similar in their speech and mannerisms (and womanising). Óscar Fentanes also portrays two parts, Inspector Olguín [an in-joke, since the actor's real name is Óscar García Olguín] and his mother. Fentanes plays nearly identical characters in *Las travesuras del Super-Chido* and *El Lambiscón Verde*, although the names and occupations of his roles are different and he carries a different stuffed animal in each movie! Vitola is mostly wasted in a small role, and Diana Golden is just eye candy in a supporting part.

*Metiche y encajoso* is episodic and somewhat unfocused, but retains just enough narrative thread to avoid complete anarchy, and contains a reasonable amount of fun. [Sources list 3 "sequels"--*Metiche y encajoso II*, *Metiche y encajoso III*, and *Metiche y encajoso IV*--however the first is apparently an alternate title for *Las travesuras del Super-Chido*, and the latter two films were made in the mid-late '90s and do not appear to be actual sequels.]



**Las travesuras del Super Chido\*** [The Antics of Super Chido] (Zyanya Prods., 1989) *Prod:* Juan Garrido, Óscar Fentanes; *Dir:* Alejandro Todd; *Scr:* Óscar Fentanes, Juan Garrido; *Photo:* Xavier Cruz Ruvalcaba; *Music:* Marcos Lizama; *Prod Mgr:* Alfonso Granados Ayala; *Film Ed:* Enrique Puente Portillo; *Union:* STIC  
\*this film is sometimes known as *Super Chile* and *Metiche y encajoso II*

**Cast:** Luis de Alba (*Juan Camaney "El Chido"*), Óscar Fentanes (*don Pedrote Blanco*), Gabriela Goldsmith (*Luisa Lana*), Jorge Arvizu (*"El Tata" (Jaime Oso)*), Charly Valentino (*gang leader*), Diana Herrera (*Valentina*), Carmelita González (*Zenaida; Meche*), Pedro Orozco (*"Pedrin" (Ceferino)*), Armando Ramírez, Olivia Rex (*Gaudencia*), Sofía Maldonado, Tito Guillén (*terrorist*), Charly Hauptvogel (*terrorist*), Juan Alanis, Silvana Durán, César Valdés, Blanca Lidia Muñoz (*Ruperta*)

**Notes:** somewhat better than *El Lambiscón Verde* but not quite as coherent as *Metiche y Encajoso*, two other "superhero" films starring Luis de Alba and Óscar Fentanes. The version(s) of *Las travesuras del Super Chido* I have seen may have been cut (or else the Diana Herrera photo on the lobby card shown here didn't appear in the final release version), but I can't imagine the original was any improvement. The concept--a spoof of Superman--is worlds better than the execution, which bogs down in long, unfunny dialogue scenes.

A strange, oversized "baby" is found in a Mexican town (it isn't completely clear he came from outer space--although the trailer says he did--a large cloud of smoke is shown when he arrives) and later adopted by rancher Zenaida and her henpecked husband Ceferino. When the baby grows up, he is known as El Chido and demonstrates the ability to fly. He tells his parents he is leaving "Chicavilla" [Smallville] to fight for justice in the capital, "Chilangopolis" [a combination of Metropolis and *chilango*, a term for residents of Mexico City]. Zenaida tells him to visit her sister Meche there.

Meche, who has three attractive daughters, welcomes El Chido into her home. She convinces don Pedro, publisher of the newspaper "La Neta" [= The Daily



Planet], to give El Chido a job. Because Pedro lusts after Meche's daughters, he agrees (El Chido's job will be to read the

newspaper every day, "because we need [more] readers"). El Chido meets reporter Luisa Lana [= Lois Lane] and photographer Jaime Oso [= Jimmy Olsen].

When a gang of terrorists tries to blow up La Neta, El Chido feigns cowardice and runs away. Luisa and Jaime are surprised when superhero Super Chile flies to the scene and disables the bomb. [Through the rest of the film, the terrorists--or gangsters, or something--repeatedly try to blow up the newspaper building, but always fail because of their own ineptitude.]

A totally unrelated subplot involves La Valentina, who threatens to sell stolen nuclear secrets unless paid a large ransom, and also kidnaps Meche's three daughters. Another long and irrelevant sequence takes place in a nightclub, where El Chido's cousins appear as part of an all-female musical group, and El Chido gets drunk.

Luisa suspects Super Chile and El Chido are one and the same. Just as she prepares to reveal Super Chile's secret identity, El Chido wakes up--he is actually an unshaven loafer drinking in a *pulque* shop. It was all a dream! The film's other characters--including Jaime Oso, don Pedrote, the terrorists--are also customers. Outside, El Chido runs into Luisa and he offers her a ride on his bicycle, since she's in a hurry. As they start out, El Chido

murmurs the same words that allowed Super Chile to fly, and his bike rises into the air (in a parody of *E.T.*)!

The costume worn by Super Chile is similar to El Chile in *Metiche y encajoso*, with some revisions: a different hat (El Chile and El Mole wore hats made of folded newspaper), a more elaborate *chile* emblem on the chest. Óscar Fentanes--with an Avery Schreiber-style moustache--as don Pedrote looks identical to his characters in *Metiche y encajoso* and *El Lambiscón Verde*, but this time he's a newspaper publisher who carries a plush vulture doll rather than a police inspector or an undefined rich guy who carries a plush Garfield doll. So, completely different. Jorge Arvizu doesn't play an Asian stereotype, surprise! Gabriela Goldsmith is the starlet *du jour* and is fine, and it's nice to see Carmelita González, as well as the usual cast of Luis de Alba-film veterans (Charly Valentino, Charly Hauptvogel, etc.).

The production values of *Las travesuras del Super Chido* are adequate, with some very rudimentary special effects. The film has a few amusing sequences but too much of the film consists of long comedy routines which are extraneous to the plot and not that funny anyway.

[reprinted with additions, from MFB v.8 #9 Nov-Dec 2002]



## El Lambiscón Verde [The Green Sycophant]

(Zyanya Filmaciones, ©1990) *Prod:* Juan Garrido, Óscar Fentanes; *Dir:* Óscar Fentanes; *Scr:* Óscar Fentanes, Juan Garrido, Luis de Alba; *Photo:* Antonio Ruiz; *Music:* Marcos Lizama; *Themes:* Armando Ramírez; *Prod Mgr:* Alfonso Granados; *Asst Dir:* Agustín Lara A.; *Film Ed:* Francisco Chiu; *Camera Op:* Fabián Monroy; *Decor:* Antonio Castro;

*Makeup:* Guillermina Oropeza; *Sound Op:* Rogelio Pichardo; *Spec FX:* Arturo Godínez; *Union:* STIC

**Cast:** Luis de Alba (*Gato*), Jorge Arvizu "El Tata" (*El Maestro*), Felicia Mercado (*?Paty*), Óscar Fentanes (*Óscar, el Lambiscón Verde\**), Antonio Raxel (*judge*), Gerardo Zepeda "El Chiquilín" (*gang leader*), Tito Guillén (*gang member*), Armando Ramírez, Héctor Reynoso (*The Mayor*), Nora Torrero (*woman in red dress*), Charly Hauptvogel [sic] (*gang member*), Claudia Tate, Los Kaluris, Sonai Velestri (*?Sonia*), Claudia Bringas (*Srta. Bringas*), Raúl López, César Valdez, Fidel Abrego, Esther Barroso, Ana Del Terán, Luis Reynoso (*Carlos Augusto*), Emilio Domínguez y su Orquesta

\*[he's also called "Carlos" in one scene]





**Notes:** this is a really terrible film, poorly-made, incoherent and unfunny. Unlike some other Luis de Alba/Zyanya movies in this era, none of the random and unrelated scenes is even marginally amusing. The best things about *El Lambiscón Verde* [title is a pun on the Spanish name for the Green Hornet, *El Avispón Verde*] are the hero's costume and vintage automobile!



The wealthy Óscar (whose actual occupation is unclear) is named the Lambiscón Verde by an Asian "Master," who advises him "never stain this hero's costume I'm giving you...because dry-cleaning is expensive." The mayor of the city repeatedly asks Óscar to help him fight crime, always removing his eyeglasses and saying with a pregnant pause to send "...the Lambiscón Verde" (accompanied by Gato, his servant/assistant). A criminal gang has falsified ownership documents of three large automobile factories, stealing them from the rightful owners (three attractive young women). A judge gives the women 72 hours to prove their case (the events of the movie obviously take longer than 3 days). The gang has also abducted the women's fathers (?grandfathers) and is holding them prisoner, and repeatedly kidnaps and/or threatens the women as well. At the end of the movie, the gang is somehow defeated and arrested, and the women's fortunes are safe.



The above plot description may seem fairly straight-forward, but the film itself is not. Want an example? In one scene, a young woman (I thought she was a streetwalker but it isn't clear) strolling down a street at night is confronted by several members of the criminal gang, who intend to abduct her (for lecherous reasons unrelated to the main "plot"). She's rescued by Gato and the Lambiscón Verde, who say they'll see her home safely. After 5 minutes of intervening



scenes, the young woman is shown in Óscar's apartment with him, preparing for a sexual interlude. There's a knock at the door: it's Óscar's fiancée, so he tells Gato to pretend the first woman is his girlfriend. Then Gato's fiancée and his girlfriend show up. Gato and Óscar try to convince each

woman that the other is insane, then the first two women emerge and finally a masked criminal forces the women all to leave at gunpoint; she then reveals herself to be Óscar's

sexy maid. None of this is funny and none of this has any relevance to anything else in *El Lambiscón Verde*, and yet it takes up a significant percentage of the film's running time (about 11 minutes!).

Other major time-wasters: a nearly 6-minute sequence in a women's aerobics class (led by Felicia Mercado's character) with Óscar, Gato and the criminal gang all in drag; a 14-minute "wedding reception" sequence (which looks so different, visually, than the rest of the footage that I was convinced it was from a different film until Luis de Alba and Óscar Fentanes finally show up) complete with musical numbers and a very long speech by de Alba. To be strictly fair, both of these sequences are very, very marginally related to the "plot," but the connection is so tenuous as to be practically nonexistent.



How could this occur? As slipshod as *Metiche y encajoso* and *Las travesuras del Super Chido* were, narratively, they are masterpieces of scripting and the filmmaking art compared to *El Lambiscón Verde*. Many of the scenes between de Alba and Fentanes appear improvised, but they're not even funny so the whole idea of screen comics riffing on a theme turns out badly. This infects all of the performances, with half the cast overacting badly and the other half underplaying stiffly.

Ironically, the production values aren't horrible: the photography, sound, etc., are reasonably professional. As noted above, the green vintage auto (with a cartoonish "hornet" painted on one door) looks interesting but serves no real purpose.

*El Lambiscón Verde* was made in 1990 and shockingly got a theatrical release in Mexico in 1994, presumably at a time when cinemas were desperate for product. Pretty much a waste of time.



**La verdadera historia de Barman y Droguin**  
[The True Story of Barman and Droguin] (Prods.

Viejo-Estrella Films ©1991) *Exec Prod*: Gilberto & Raúl Trujillo; "Valentín Trujillo presents"; *Dir*: Gilberto de Anda; *Scr*: Gilberto de Anda, Valentín Trujillo; *Orig Idea*: Gilberto & Raúl Trujillo; *Photo*: José Luis Vera; *Music*: Edgar Sosa; *Prod Mgr*: Carlos Lozoya; *Prod Coord*: Víctor Lozoya; *Asst Dir*: Fernando Bidart; *Film Ed*: Diana de la Cruz; *Action Coord*: José Luis Quintero; *Sound Op*: Cuauhtémoc Ponce

**Cast**: Ascensio Cruz (*Ricardo*), Víctor Trujillo (*Bruno*), Valentín Trujillo (*El Ejecutor* [billed, also called "Perro"]), Raúl Trujillo (*Pitirijas*), José Luis Cordero "Pocholo" (*kidnapper-clown*), Lizbeth Castro (*Laura García*), José Luis Avendaño (*store clerk*), Gilberto de Anda (*newspaper editor*), José L. Murillo (*police commander*), Blanca Lidia Muñoz (*doña Licha*), Gabriela del Valle (*traffic cop*); *store robbers*: Marcos de Anda, Gabriel Martínez; José Luis Barragán (*cop*), Alejandro Ávila (*reporter*), *gang members*: César Balzemar, Alejandro Mungúia, Ricardo Espinoza; *tourists*: Eleazar García Jr., Javier García; *robbers*: José Luis Quintero, Gerardo Muñoz; Arturo Medina (*policeman*), Jorge Gallardo (*clown's henchman*), Héctor A. Bidart (*kidnaped boy*), *gang members*: Víctor Lozoya, Carlos Lozoya

**Notes**: a relatively amusing, self-aware superhero spoof, *La verdadera historia de Barman y Droguin* does suffer from one flaw that, perhaps not coincidentally, is shared by many other (far bigger-budgeted) superhero movies--the "origin story" takes up the first two-thirds of the film's running time, leaving a lesser amount of time for the heroes' "first adventure." This is compounded by the inclusion in the first half of the movie of 3 long sequences (probably more than 10 minutes, total) of footage from *Yo, el ejecutor*, watched by the protagonists in a cinema.



Bruno owns "La Bati-Cueva" (The Bat Cave) *cantina*. His best friend Ricardo is a failed inventor, and when Bruno refuses to loan him any more money, Ricardo decides to rob a convenience store across the street. Bruno prevents Ricardo from doing so, and the two men manage to foil a real robbery (spraying soda at one criminal and hitting another with a bucket). They leave before the police arrive, and the owner says the two men appeared out of nowhere and vanished into thin air, like comic book superheroes. Reporter Laura is assigned to the story.

Ricardo is enthusiastic about becoming a crime-fighter, but Bruno refuses to get involved. However, when he sees Laura about to be assaulted by some thugs, Bruno pulls his ski mask over his face and defeats the men. The makeshift mask and Bruno's t-shirt--which bears the Bacardi "bat" trademark--cause Laura to dub the mystery men "Batman and Robin." The thrill he got from saving Laura makes Bruno change his mind: he will be Barman (after his *cantina* job) and the often-drunk Ricardo is dubbed Droguin.

Using Bruno's money, Ricardo pays car dealer & master mechanic El Pingüino (The Penguin) to create a supercar, the "Baticuda." The two men fashion costumes



more or less identical to Batman and Robin, except Barman has the Bacardi bat on his chest and Droguin has a "D" instead of an "R" on his costume. Surprisingly, the two men have some success battling crime

(Bruno is earlier shown taking boxing lessons, but otherwise their sudden martial arts prowess comes as a surprise to the viewer).

Ricardo (somehow) intercepts a telephone call from one criminal to another: they are planning to kidnap the son of a wealthy man ("his father owns a liquor store!") when the boy leaves school that day. Ricardo uses his computer to narrow down two possible locations: he and Barman will take one each. However, since Barman will drive the

Baticuda, Droguin (in full costume) has to take a bus! Ricardo sees a juggling clown and a food vendor abduct the boy and radios Barman; he stows away in the trunk of the getaway car. Meanwhile, Barman is stuck in traffic and accidentally rear-ends



another driver. [When the man starts to use profanity, Barman says "We're trying to make a film for the whole family."] Luckily, Laura, who suspects Bruno is Barman, has been following him, and she extricates him from the incident. They track Droguin using an early form of GPS, but he's been discovered by the clown-kidnaper (who isn't called The Joker or *Guasón* as he's known in Mexico--although Barman and Droguin later refer to him by various names including "Brozo," "Rabanito" and "Cepillín," famous Mexican pop-culture clowns) and shot! When Laura sees the bullet hole in Droguin's costume she says "you need a doctor!" but he says "no, a tailor would be better" (he and Barman are wearing stolen police bulletproof vests).



Barman and Droguin confront the clown and his henchman, but the kidnaper summons four heavily-armed assassins. Things look bad for our *Duo Dinámico*, but suddenly policeman El Ejecutor--named after the Valentín Trujillo film *Yo, el ejecutor*, which Ricardo and Bruno repeatedly watch--appears and kills the four armed men! Barman and Droguin defeat the two other criminals and free their hostage. Mission accomplished! (and a thumbs-up from El Ejecutor)

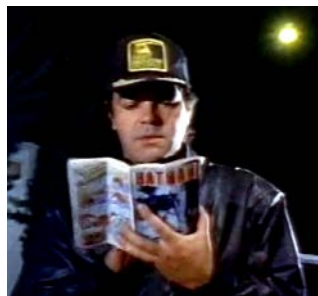


Víctor Trujillo and Ausencio Cruz were comedians who began working together in Mexican television in 1985. They later broke up the team and Trujillo--as sleazy clown Brozo--became the host of an extremely popular morning TV show for a number of years. Both Trujillo and Cruz are fine in *La verdadera historia de Barman y Droguin*, with about an equal amount of screen time. Trujillo is a bit more prominent although he's sort of the straight man: his Barman persona reminds one of the "Badman" Funny or Die videos starring Pete Holmes as a dopey Dark Knight, especially when he's stuck in traffic or battling some annoying teen gang members (while his cape is stuck in his car door). Trujillo also impersonates a stereotypical *gachupín* (Spaniard), trying to throw Laura off the track.



The rest of the cast is adequate, and play their roles mostly straight. Valentín Trujillo, aside from his copious *Yo, el ejecutor* footage, has a few scenes as the policeman who helps Barman and Droguin (although he's called El Ejecutor at the end, his superior officer refers to him as "Perro," an allusion to Trujillo's earlier hit *Perro callejero*). Lizbeth Castro is satisfactory as reporter Laura, but not especially memorable.

The script, in addition to the problem mentioned above, has a few loose ends. Barman and Droguin's fighting prowess is surprising and never clearly explained, and while the origins of the Baticuda and their tear-gas pellets are shown, some of their other gadgets (their wrist-radios, Ricardo's computer, his ability to intercept phone calls, and the secret garage where the Baticuda is parked) pop up out of nowhere. It's also mighty coincidental that Laura's car



won't start and she's nearly assaulted by some criminals just when Bruno is walking nearby. While Bruno's bar is called La Baticueva and there are some Batman figurines and pictures inside, he's not depicted as a Batman fan or even a comic book

fan at all (it's El Ejecutor who's shown reading a "Batman" comic), so there's some disconnect. Still, the narrative is fairly straightforward and rational.

*La verdadera historia de Barman y Droguin* isn't great, but it is professionally put together (although shamelessly padded with *Yo, el ejecutor* footage--I guess they only had 75 minutes of material and couldn't think of anything else to fill up the running time) and moderately amusing at times.



## Additional Obituaries

### Juan Luis Buñuel

Juan Luis Buñuel, the oldest son of Luis Buñuel and a filmmaker himself, died on 6 December 2017 in Paris; he was 83 years old. Juan Luis Buñuel was born in Paris in November 1934 and moved to Mexico with his family in 1946. He

assisted his father on films such as *Los ambiciosos*, *The Young One*, *Viridiana*, and *That*



*Obscure Object of Desire*, and also worked with other directors on Mexican-shot films including *Los pequeños gigantes*, *Viva María*, and *Guns for San Sebastian*.

Juan Luis Buñuel began directing documentary shorts in the 1960s, including the award-winning *Calanda*. He later made a number of features in France, such as *Au rendez-vous de la mort joyeuse*, *La femme aux bottes rouges*, and *Leonor*. He worked occasionally in Mexico, directing a remake of *La rebelión de los colgados* (1986) and the documentary *Guanajuato, una leyenda* (1990).



## Most Popular Mexican Films of 2017

According to IMCINE (and Boxoffice Mojo, although these do not exactly match), the most popular Mexican movies at the domestic box-office were:

*Hazlo como hombre* (#21 overall)

*3 Idiotas*

*Cómo cortar a tu patán*

*Me gusta, pero me asusta*

*Todos queremos a alguien*

*Mientras el lobo no está*

*El tamaño sí importa*

All of these films except the thriller *Mientras el lobo no está* are "light" comedies. 85 Mexican films premiered in 2017 and sold 21.5 million tickets (although the top 5 movies accounted for 12.5 million of these, meaning the other 80 films split just 9 million tickets between them).

The biggest hit in Mexico was the Hollywood production *Coco*, which combined Mexican audiences' love of animated features and a Mexican theme & setting to earn \$56 million dollars (the next highest grosser was *The Fate of the Furious* at \$36 million).



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