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THE PHENOMENAL RESORTES

El beisbolista fenómeno [The Phenomenal Baseball Player] (Prods. Galindo Hermanos, 1951)



Prod: Jesús Galindo; *Dir:* Fernando Cortés; *Scr:* Fernando Cortés, Fernando Galiana; Alfredo Varela Jr.; *Orig. Story:* Eduardo Galindo; *Photo:* José Ortiz Ramos; *Music:* Gonzalo Curiel; *Prod Mgr:* Porfirio Triay Peniche; *Prod Chief:* José Alcalde G.; *Asst Dir:* Jesús Marín; *Film Ed:* Jorge Bustos; *Art*

Dir: Ramón Rodríguez; *Makeup:* Noemí Wallace; *Camera Op:* Manuel González, Carlos Sorencen; *Lighting:* Luis García; *Sound Dir:* Jesús González Gancy; *Dialog Rec:* José de Pérez; *Music/Re-rec:* J. González G.

Cast: Adalberto Martínez "Resortes" (Amado Rodríguez Fernández), Óscar Pulido (don Ernesto Carmona), Aurora Segura (Clara Carmona), Raúl Martínez (Raúl Sandoval), Fanny Schiller (doña Justa Carmona), Alfredo Varela Jr. (Nicanor Buenavista), Consuelo Pastor (Yolanda Montero), Jorge Treviño (Nacho), Ángel Infante (Ramón, player), Julio Ahuet (Corcholatas player), Nacho Contla (Remigio), Jorge Arriaga (union rep), Eduardo Acuña (Jimmy), Juan Bruno Tarraza (himself), "El Mago" Septién (himself), Pepe el Regañón [Víctor Alcocer] (announcer); baseball players: Ramón Bragaña, Lázaro Zalazar [sic], Manuel Arroyo, Enrique Leduc, Alejandro Crespo, Pedro Comas, Wilfredo Salas, Leonel Aldama, Alfredo "Moscón" Jiménez, Felipe "La Muñeca" Iturralde, Epitacio "La Mala" Torres, "Diablo" Núñez, Howard Easterling, Pablo García, Ángel Abreu; Chel López (guest at dance), Lucrecia Muñoz

(Nacho's daughter), Ignacio Peón (spectator), Salvador Quiroz (Veracruz coach), Alfonso Torres (Cuban coach), Rafael Torres (bet runner), Fernando Yapur (baseball player)

Notes: *El beisbolista fenómeno* was the first in an unofficial "series" of movies starring Resorts as a character who receives other-worldly assistance to change his life, becoming a baseball player, professional wrestler, *futbol* player, policeman, etc. This is quite a good film, and rather surprising in some ways: Resorts plays a more fully-developed character than he would in some later pictures, he minimises his *shtick* (for instance, he doesn't perform any of his patented "eccentric" dancing--in fact, in one scene he deliberately dances badly with Aurora Segura), a significant amount of attention (especially in the first two-thirds of the movie) is given to other performers (notably Óscar Pulido), and there are relatively few blatant slapstick sequences. In fact, *El beisbolista fenómeno* turns fairly serious in the second half.



The film opens with voiceover narration by Jimmy, a deceased baseball player who never got to achieve his fondest wish: to pitch a no-hitter. He's been given permission to return to Earth to fulfill his goal, and randomly chooses Pénjamo, a city in the state of Guanajuato. Beer baron don Ernesto is a fanatic baseball fan whose signature product is "Jon-Ron" [Home Run] beer. Ernesto has promised the trucking concession for his brewery to the winner of a baseball tournament. During a

game between Raúl's "Botelleros" [Bottlers] and the "Corcholatas" [Corks], Ernesto's nerdy secretary Nicanor accidentally breaks his eyeglasses and yet still hits a home run. It lands on the head of sleeping hobo Amado. Jimmy embues Amado with baseball ability, allowing him to throw the ball back onto the field from a great distance.

Amado is tracked down and offered a job--at first he thinks they want him to join a gang of crooks (he isn't averse to this, apparently being a small-time pickpocket and burglar himself), then realises don Ernesto wants him to play baseball. Despite his ignorance of the game, Amado proves to be an amazingly talented pitcher and hitter. Raúl's team wins the contest and becomes the official "Jon-Ron" beer team that will play exhibition games throughout the country.

Meanwhile, Amado has fallen in love with Clara, don Ernesto's daughter. In a situation virtually identical to



what occurred in *Ay, Palillo, no te rajes!* (1948), Clara's use of the third-person when speaking of the man she loves (Raúl) is misunderstood by Amado as a declaration of love for him.

Distracted by Clara's late arrival at a game against Veracruz, Amado allows a home run, frustrating Jimmy's hope for a perfect game. Later, Nicanor (who also has a crush on Clara), tells Amado that Clara and Raúl are in love. Feeling betrayed, Amado quits the team. He accepts an offer to play for a Cuban team, and singer Yolanda becomes his mistress. Don Ernesto cancels the barnstorming tour and fires Nicanor.

A montage follows, showing Amado pitching in Cuba, Venezuela, and Puerto Rico. He drinks and gambles, and never pitches a no-hitter, which makes Jimmy sad. Finally, Jimmy materialises in Amado's hotel room in Puerto Rico and says Amado's actions mean Jimmy's spirit will never be able to rest. He leaves (taking Amado's baseball prowess with him), but says Amado can call on him if he ever decides to change his life.



There is an interesting bit in this sequence. Jimmy, wearing a "Stars" baseball uniform [I'm not sure if this refers to the Cuban Stars, a Negro League team from 1907-32], shows up and "pops" in and out, proving to the tipsy Amado that he's really

a ghost. Amado gets in bed and sees a figure next to him, covered up with a blanket. He thinks it's Yolanda (they'd

previously had a spat) and is shocked to discover it's Jimmy. In the first place, this makes it clear that Yolanda and Amado are lovers, which is a bit blatant for the time period. Also, Amado asks Jimmy to get out of the bed, to protect his (Amado's) reputation!

Amado returns to Mexico and signs with Veracruz. In his first game against Monterrey, Amado is terrible, walking the first three players. He tries to summon Jimmy, but at first can't remember his name--"Harvey? No, not Harvey" (alluding to the famous invisible rabbit)--but finally contacts his spirit friend and throws a no-hitter from then on. Jimmy hits a home run in the empty stadium and departs for Heaven.

Raúl and Clara arrive at the stadium: they received a telegram from "Amado" (actually Jimmy) indicating this would be his last game, and everyone reconciles. Don Ernesto appears, wearing *futbol* garb to promote his new beer called "Gol!" He wants Amado to play center-forward on his team. Amado gazes at the sky and says "Jimmy? Send me a *futbol* player!"

Whether or not a sequel was already in the works, this final bit leads directly into 1952's *El luchador fenómeno*, which begins with a plan for Amado to play *futbol* but quickly switches to professional wrestling. *Resortes* wouldn't become a *futbolista* until *El futbolista fenómeno* in 1978.



For fans of baseball, *El beisbolista fenómeno* features a number of interesting points. Óscar Pulido's character is "Ernesto Carmona," the name of one of the founders of the Mexican League of baseball in 1925. A number of players for the Monterrey Sultanes and the Veracruz team have roles in the movie. [At the time, Veracruz had 2 teams in the league, the Azules and the Águila. Based on the presence of Ramón Bragaña, it appears it's the Azules who are in the movie. Oddly enough, this team shut down in 1951, leaving Águila as the only Veracruz representative in the league (and Águila would eventually move to Nuevo Laredo in 2018).] Many of these players had long international careers, playing in the Negro Leagues in the USA, the Mexican League, and in Cuba, Venezuela, etc. Cuba-born Lázaro Salazar played professionally in the Negro Leagues in the USA, for numerous teams in Mexico, and also in Venezuela (where he played and managed). Howard Easterling, born in Mississippi, moved to the Mexican League after the Negro Leagues shut down in the late 1940s.

As noted above, *Resortes* doesn't have any speciality dances in the film, but *El beisbolista fenómeno* does feature more than a few songs. Óscar Pulido sings a "Jon-Ron" beer song at a dance, Raúl Martínez serenades Aurora Segura, Consuelo Pastor does two numbers (including a version of "Preciosa")--accompanied by Juan Bruno Terraza on one--and a song about "Bola de humo--El beisbolista fenómeno" can be heard on the soundtrack during Amado's Cuban sojourn.

El beisbolista fenómeno is entertaining overall. Much of the film was shot on location, and the footage in stadiums, etc., adds considerably to the effectiveness of the picture. The direction of Fernando Cortés is assured without being especially stylish, and--the character of Jimmy aside--most of what we see in the movie is more or less realistic (Amado is a great pitcher but his pitches don't defy gravity or anything).



The performances are solid throughout. Óscar Pulido pulls out all the stops and while his near-constant use of English phrases (mostly baseball-related, but not all) gets a little tiresome, he's consistently amusing throughout: *Resortes* seems very restrained in comparison, but is both amusing (in the first half of the picture) and dramatically convincing (in the latter sections). Alfredo Varela Jr. plays his usual nebbishly sort of character but with a rare nasty streak; Fanny Schiller, Nacho Contla, and Jorge Treviño have little to do. Aurora Segura and Consuelo Pastor are both attractive and given a bit more character development than usual: Clara isn't to blame for Amado's misfortune, but she is rather clueless and self-centered, while Yolanda is something of a gold-digger but isn't depicted in seriously negative terms.

El beisbolista fenómeno isn't a full-blown wacky comedy or a *Resortes* "vehicle," but on its own terms it's extremely entertaining and interesting.

[Trivia note: in one scene don Ernesto says something that Amado doesn't understand. Ernesto tells him it was "German," and explains what it meant. Amado replies in Otomí (an indigenous language) and declines to translate, suggesting it was a rude response. The film begins in Guanajuato, which is one of the states where the Otomi

people live, however Amado otherwise has no obvious *indio* attributes.]



El luchador fenómeno [The Phenomenal

Wrestler] (Prods. Galindo Hermanos, 1952) *Prod:* Jesús Galindo; *Dir:* Fernando Cortés; *Adapt:* Fernando Cortés, Fernando Galiana, Alfredo Varela Jr.; *Story:* Eduardo Galindo, Fernando Galiana, Alfredo Varela Jr.; *Photo:* Víctor Herrera; *Music:* José de la Vega; *Prod Mgr:* Porfirio Triay Peniche; *Prod Chief:* Ricardo Beltri; *Asst Dir:* Julio Cahero; *Film Ed:* Jorge Bustos; *Art Dir:* Ramon Rodríguez G.; *Camera Op:* Guadalupe García; *Makeup:* Elda Loza; *Lighting:* Luis Medina; *Sound Supv:* James L. Fields; *Dialog Rec:* Enrique Rodríguez; *Music/Re-rec:* Galdino Samperio

Cast: *Resortes* (Amado Rodríguez Fernández), Bárbara Gil (Marta), Óscar Pulido (don Ernesto Carmona), Tito Junco (Danny López), Wolf Rubinskis (El Diablo Negro), Joaquín García "Borolas" (Leo), Mario García "Harapos" (Cerrillo), Nicolás Rodríguez (sec'y. general of Limbo), Ángel Merino, Julio Ahuet (man hit by car), Ignacio Contla (comisario), Eugenio Arreola, Yolanda Ortiz, Héctor Mateos, Stefan Verne (El Médico's corner man); **Wrestlers:** El Médico Asesino, El Bulldog [Camilo Pérez], Lalo el exótico, El Lobo Negro [Guillermo Hernández], Tonina Jackson, Sergio Llanes, Firpo Segura, Hombre Montaña, Juventino Romero; **Referees:** Raúl Romero, José Alvarez; **Announcers:** Mago Septien, "Pepe el regañón" [Víctor Alcocer]

Notes: although it would be a few years before the genre caught on, 1952 was a seminal year for the *lucha libre* film. Four major movies were produced on the topic, each looking at a different aspect: *El*

Enmascarado de Plata (wrestler as crimefighting superhero), *Huracán Ramírez* (wrestler as family man in a melodrama-comedy), *El luchador fenómeno* (wrestler as comedian in a fantasy-comedy), and *La bestia magnífica* (wrestler as pro athlete in a sports melodrama).



Although the films were produced by four different companies with almost no duplication in the technical and creative credits, the supporting casts (of wrestlers) were fairly consistent: El Médico Asesino appeared in three, Guillermo Hernández "Lobo Negro" in all four, Sergio Llanes in three, El Bulldog in three, Wolf Rubinskis in two, Tonina Jackson in two, etc.

El luchador fenómeno is a sequel to *El beisbolista fenómeno* (1951). In that movie, the spirit of deceased Cuban ballplayer "Jimmy" possesses Amado

(Resortes), hoping that his surrogate can pitch the perfect game he was never able to. In *Luchador...*, Amado sends a message to "Limbo" (apparently a sort of sports-hero heaven), asking for the spiritual aid of a



futbol player (there is an amusing sequence in which a Brazilian soccer player and an American football player argue about which one should go to help Amado. The Brazilian says he should go, and says that American football is played with a "melon covered in leather."). Amado works for don Ernesto, who owns a brewery that he promotes via sports. However, dead wrestler El Diablo Negro--who never won a championship--waylays the soccer player and possesses Amado's body instead.

Amado and don Ernesto decide professional wrestling is equally valid to promote beer sales, and Amado becomes "El Tigre de Pénjamo" (Pénjamo is his hometown, and this is sort of like calling oneself "The Tiger of Brooklyn" or the "The Tiger of Wichita"). At first Amado's scrawny physique draws scorn from the wrestling world, but--with El Diablo Negro's invisible help--he puts together a string of victories. Promoter Danny López, after losing large sums of money betting against Amado, tries to get his client to throw the championship bout against El Médico Asesino, but Amado refuses. Instead, Danny frames Amado for vehicular homicide, and the young man becomes despondent. He refuses to wrestle, prompting El Diablo Negro to abandon him. However, don Ernesto and Amado's girlfriend Marta prove that Amado didn't kill anyone, and he successfully defeats El Médico Asesino to win the title.

Afterwards, Amado is set upon by a gang of toughs in Danny's employ, but the spirits of El Diablo Negro, Jimmy, and the soccer player come to Earth and thrash the villains, then vanish.

Although Resortes is fine in the role, one could easily see Tin Tan playing the part (and in fact, *Las locuras de Tin Tan*, 1951, included a wrestling sequence). Curiously, Resortes apparently did a lot of his own wrestling in this picture, or else the shots of his double were excellent (even freeze-frames don't reveal an obvious replacement). In fact, one might say the wrestling sequences are too long, if anything--they are played mostly straight, with both Amado and his various opponents taking a lot of hard falls. There are three major ring sequences: Amado's

first bout vs. El Bulldog; a tag team match between Amado and "Lalo el exótico" (whose valet spritzes him with perfume before the match; Amado asks don Ernesto if his partner is effeminate, but Ernesto says the man has "blue blood") and Tonina Jackson and Lobo Negro; and the final match against El Médico Asesino.

It's interesting to note El Médico is apparently intended to be a real doctor--to delay the bout, don Ernesto asks El Médico and his assistant (a nurse) to attend a "sick child," and later El Médico gives Amado a physical checkup in the ring before they wrestle! And given El Médico's role as the Santo surrogate in *El Enmascarado de Plata*, it is also amusing to note the crowd of young boys who beseege the masked wrestler for autographs when he climbs into the ring. At one point in the match, Amado rips off El Médico's mask, but recoils in horror from his opponent's (unseen, apparently ugly) face, and puts the mask back on!

The cast of *El luchador fenómeno* is loaded with familiar faces of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. Tito Junco plays his usual slick gangster (with Harapos as his sidekick who lights matches for his boss on his own cheek!), and Wolf Ruvinskis has a rare (for the period) sympathetic role. Bárbara Gil is attractive



but has little to do; Borolas is amusing in another small part. However, acting honors have to go to Óscar Pulido, playing yet another of his patented eccentric, bombastic characters. As noted before, Resortes is good as Amado, forsaking his dancing and toning down his mugging. Although he made at least four more *fenómeno* movies -- including one in which he finally got to be a soccer player--none of these were direct sequels to the first two pictures. The production values of *El luchador fenómeno* are satisfactory--the heavenly Limbo looks a little cheap, though, with a lot of dry ice fog but not much in the way of set dressing-- and the direction is competent and assured.

[Review originally appeared in MFB 9/2 (2002)]



El futbolista fenómeno [The Phenomenal Football Player] (CONACITE 2, 1978) *Dir:* Fernando Cortés; *Scr:* Julio Porter, Fernando Cortes; *Orig. Story:* Adalberto Martínez "Resortes"; *Photo:* Raúl Domínguez; *Music:* Marcos Lifshitz; *Prod Mgr:* Eduardo Danel; *Co-Dir:* Damián Acosta; *Film Ed:* Sergio Soto; *Art Dir:* Jorge Sainz; *Camera Op:* Roberto Rivera; *Futbol Advisor:* Mario Paves; *Makeup:* Victoria Celis; *Sound:* Roberto Martínez; *Re-rec:* Ricardo Saldívar; *Sound Ed:* Ignacio Soto; *Union:* STIC

Cast: Adalberto Martínez “Resortes” (*Amado Rodríguez Fernández aka Resortes*), Mónica Prado (*Elvira*); **Purple Gang:** Polo Ortín, Joaquín García “Borolas,” Alfonso Zayas, Jorge Zamora; Güicho Paves (*Güicho*), Pedro D’Aguiñon (*Licenciado*), Héctor Godoy (*alien*), Gerardo Zepeda (*Chiquilín*), Sergio Barrios (*team doctor*), Humberto Elizondo (*alien*), Francisco Llopis (*club director*), Carlos Rotzinger (*club director Jiménez*), Miguel Suárez (*Col. Martínez*), Ángel Fernández (*announcer*), Juan Dosal (*TV interviewer*), Fernando Larrañaga (*Plácido de la Mora*), Roy de la Serna (*club dir.*), Guillermo Inclán (*club dir.*), Angelita Castany, Chad Hastings, Hugo Leos, Jorge Fegan?, José Luis Said (?*Lt. Said*), Josefina Tovar, María Eugenia Martínez, Angelina Barraza, Grupo Venezuela de Pepe Lozano (*band*), Club Deportivo Toluca players: Walter Gassire, Mario Medina, Héctor Hugo Egui, Arturo López, Rigoberto Cisneros, Morris Ruiz Estrada, De la Torre, Ángel Ramos, [Javier?] Cárdenas



Notes: Resortes had played “Amado Rodríguez” in *El beisbolista fenómeno* (1951), *El luchador fenómeno* (1952), and *El aviador fenómeno* (1960: no fantasy content--based on “The Suicide Club” by Robert Louis Stevenson)--all directed by Fernando Cortés--and in 1978 (a World Cup year) the two men teamed up again for *El futbolista fenómeno*. Resortes had been relegated to supporting roles for nearly a decade, but this film would to some extent revive his career as a star (although he continued to take supporting roles as well) for the next decade.

Unlike the first two *fenómeno* films which depicted supernatural events, *El futbolista fenómeno* has a science fiction premise--Amado gets super-powers from aliens--more in keeping with contemporary tastes. In fact, in one scene Mónica Prado’s character says she’s seen *La guerra de las galaxias* [aka *Star Wars*]. However, in practice the aliens are essentially gods, helping Amado from afar and giving him more or less supernatural ability (in the final match sequence, Amado does things with the ball that are literally impossible, whereas in *El beisbolista fenómeno* he was simply an excellent baseball player). In one scene Amado literally prays to the “flying saucer saints” (*santos platilleros*) to help him, and they grant his wish--but only

if he abstains from drinking beer, smoking, and chasing women (i.e., gives up his sinful ways).

A scientific expedition from Venus observes an Earth *futbol* game on the (surprisingly small) television screen in their spaceship. The aliens, puzzled at the actions of the players and spectators, bring stadium beer vendor Amado to their craft for interrogation. Amado doesn’t know (or care) much about *futbol*, but he



answers their questions (and does a dance), then is sent back to Earth. As a reward for his cooperation, the aliens implant knowledge of the whereabouts of Selección Latino Americana [SL from now on] coach Plácido in Amado’s brain. Plácido’s absence had caused SL to lose their match, and unless they do well in their next three matches, they won’t qualify for the Mundial.

[*El futbolista fenómeno* plays coy with respect to the World Cup, which is just referred to as the “Mundial.” Rather than featuring the Mexican national team, the film has the fictional “Selección Latino Americana” play various bogus opponents such as the “Plunios” and the “Delfines” (Dolphins) from “North Europe.”]

Although everyone, including his erstwhile girlfriend Elvira, thinks Amado’s tale of alien abduction is false, Amado is finally able to convince the police to accompany him to a remote cabin and rescue Plácido. Although the authorities suspect Amado of complicity in the kidnapping, Plácido gratefully hires Amado as SL’s waterboy. However, in the next match the SL players fall ill and lose; their water was apparently drugged. Plácido resigns and Amado--through the aliens’ remote influence on the club’s directors--is named the new coach. Against all odds, they win their next match.

The culprits behind SL’s misfortunes are the “Purple Gang” (who aren’t referred to this way in the movie, but always wear purple clothing), four gangsters who speak a mysterious argot. The gang sends an attractive young



woman, posing as the president of Amado’s “fan club,” to invite him and team masseur Chiquilín to a wild party. [The reasoning behind this is unclear.

Amado drinks a “special cocktail” and makes a fool of himself, dancing and chain-smoking (!) but the only result is a hangover the next day. The expected blackmail demand never appears.]

On the day of the crucial final match, the head of the "fan club" offers Amado a choice: lose the match (and earn \$100,000) or win (and be killed). Furthermore, two of SL's best players are bitten by scorpions (!) and can't play. Amado is forced to take the field as a player, and is terrible until he beseeches the aliens for assistance. They convert him into a miraculously talented *futbol* player and SL wins the match.

The aliens want to take Amado back to Venus with them, but he prefers to stay on Earth with Elvira, who--after rebuffing his advances throughout the whole movie--now suddenly decides she loves him. The Venusians do take young *futbol* prodigy Güicho (grandson of Chiquilín) back to their planet, "before the New York Cosmos sign you to a contract." [In 1975, the New York Cosmos professional soccer team had signed soccer great Pelé.]

El beisbolista fenómeno had no "villain"--the conflict is an internal one, with Amado losing his talent when he turns to a dissolute life after being rejected by the object of his affections. *El luchador fenómeno* has a more traditional plot, Amado versus crooked wrestling promoter Danny. In *El futbolista fenómeno* the "Purple Gang" sabotages the SL team for unspecified reasons (gambling?), but Amado never actively confronts them (they're arrested at the end thanks to undercover work by Elvira). Throughout the film the gang is shown celebrating and plotting, but only speak their made-up language (seemingly a combination of Spanish, Italian, Russian, and nonsense syllables), so the audience isn't privy to the details of their plan. At the very end of the movie, the new "chochi" (boss) tells his companions to stop talking gibberish and speak "the language we learned as boys in Tepito [a *barrio* of Mexico City]." They're arrested seconds later.



Compared to *El beisbolista fenómeno*, in which *Resortes* played a more or less normal character devoid of *shtick*, *El futbolista fenómeno* allows him free reign to mug for the camera, dance (twice), take various pratfalls, etc. It's interesting that the script acknowledges (multiple times) the age

disparity between Amado and Elvira, and Amado's age in general (*Resortes* was in his early sixties when he made the movie), but he repeatedly downplays this, insisting he's still active and virile, despite appearances.

Resortes is mostly the whole show. The four comedians cast as the Purple Gang--Borolas, Alfonso Zayas, Polo Ortín and Jorge Zamora--do the best they can with their unintelligible dialogue and exaggerated gestures, but they're saddled with a one-joke bit. [It is mildly amusing when leader Ortín is demoted after part of the sabotage plot fails; he's replaced by Zayas, who is subsequently forced to step down and his position is assumed by Borolas. "Upa novi chochi!" they all chant.]

The rest of the cast plays it straight; they're adequate but not outstanding. The actual *futbol* players (from the Toluca club) do a decent job in their limited "acting" footage.



The production values of *El futbolista fenómeno* are satisfactory if not elaborate. The special effects are rudimentary, but the *futbol* scenes--actually filmed in a large stadium before a real crowd--are pretty good overall. Satisfactory entertainment but not as good as its predecessors.



MEXICANS VS. MARTIANS

Santo el Enmascarado de Plata vs. "La invasión de los marcianos" [Santo the Silver-Masked Man vs. The Martian Invasion] (Producciones Cinematográficas, 1966) *Prod:* Alfonso Rosas Priego; *Director:* Alfredo B. Crevenna; *Scr:* Rafael García Travesí; *Photo:* Jorge Stahl Jr.; *Music:* Antonio Díaz Conde; *Co-ord:* Alfonso Rosas Priego Jr.; *Prod Mgr:* Mario García Camberos; *Prod Chief:* José Alcalde Gámiz; *Sub-Dir:* Felipe Palomino; *Film Ed:* Alfredo Rosas Priego; *Asst Ed:* Ramón Aupart; *Art Dir:* Fco. Marco. Ch.; *Decor:* Alberto López; *Makeup:* Margarita Ortega; *Dialog Rec:* Jesús González Ganci [sic]; *Sound Ed:* Abraham Cruz; *Re-rec:* Roberto Camacho; *Union:* STPC; *Studio:* San Ángel

Mexico City release: July 1967; 3 week run;

Authorization: A

Spanish release: Authorization date: 20 June 1967;
Total spectators: 191,143.

Cast: Santo (*himself*), Wolf Ruvinskis (*Argos*), El Nazi (*Cronos*), Ham Lee (*Morfeo*), Beni Galán (*Hércules*), Eduardo Bonada (*Martian*), Antonio Montoro (*wrestler*), Maura Monti (*Afroditá*), Belinda Corell (*Diana*), Eva Norvind (*Selene*), Gilda Mirós (*Artemisa*), Manuel Zozaya (*Prof. Odorica*), Consuelo Frank (*kidnaped mother 1*), Alicia Montoya (*kidnaped mother 2*), Roy Fletcher (*kidnaped father 2*), Mario Sevilla (*kidnaped father 1*), Nicolás Rodríguez (*Padre Lorenzo Fuentes*), N. León

"Frankenstein" (wrestler), Rosa Furman (wife at party), Sergio Ramos (Odorica's colleague), Aaron Hernán (Fernández), Ramón Menéndez (nightclub mgr.), Demetrio González (singer on TV), José Loza (science fiction writer), Ricardo Adalid (Dr. Adalid), Queta Carrasco (woman at party), Carlos Hennings (restaurant client), Miron Levine (guest at party), Antonio Padilla "Pícoro" (ring ancr); abducted children: Pepito Velázquez (Luisito), Juan Antonio Edward[s], Yolanda Guzmán; Víctor Alcocer (dubs El Santo?)



Notes: Many Santo films have self-explanatory titles and *Santo el enmascarado de plata vs. la invasión de los marcianos* is one of those. Santo fights Martians, simple. On the other hand, the original poster--which is quite well done, although it is a direct swipe from the one for 1964's *Robinson Crusoe on Mars*--is rather misleading, since it shows (a) Santo and a long-haired, green-skinned Martian (b) on another planet (the Moon?), and neither of these accurately reflects the movie itself.

Rafael García Travesí's screenplay borrows from *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, as well as the recent *El Planeta de las mujeres invasoras* (and to a lesser extent, *Gigantes planetarios*). There are some inconsistencies: the Martians claim they're on Earth to force the cessation of nuclear proliferation (they must have been following up on Klaatu's aborted mission from the 1950s), establish global peace and so forth. If they have to kill a bunch of people (including, shockingly, children) to make their point, so be it. However, later in the movie their leader Argos says they must take Santo back to Mars with them and discover the secret of his great strength and agility to improve the Martian army before it arrives to conquer Earth. Well which is it?

A Martian flying saucer approaches Earth. Their leader Argos (who only assumes this name later) breaks into television broadcasts (including Demetrio González singing a *ranchera* tune) and gives his ultimatum: Earth has to stop creating nuclear weapons, establish a global government and universal language, and agree to live in peace and harmony. Sounds good, but there's a catch: if Earth doesn't comply, Argo says Mars will destroy the planet so Earth won't disrupt the rest of the solar system. Unfortunately, no one takes him seriously (it might be the wacky costumes and headgear the Martians are wearing); Argos lands in a wooded area of Mexico and sends one of his henchmen



(later dubbed Cronos) to an outdoor sports complex. Hundreds of people are watching bicycle races and other sporting events, and El Santo is teaching wrestling to a group of young boys. Cronos, using his "astral eye" weapon, disintegrates numerous spectators, including 4 boys. [This is done by simply having them fade away, which is much less violent than it could have been, and thus probably was not as upsetting for juvenile audiences. It was also a lot cheaper than any sort of physical or optical effect.] Santo angrily attacks the Martian and they have a long and fairly exciting fight, until Cronos flips a switch on his belt and vanishes (returning to the ship).

Santo consults with Professor Odorica about the invaders. Argo goes on television again and says Mexico was chosen as their landing place because the country has



renounced the use of nuclear weapons (which seems a little contradictory--hundreds of Mexicans were disintegrated as a lesson to other countries, even though Mexico is already nuclear-free?). He adds "All resistance is futile!" Argos

then teleports into Odorica's lab and reiterates his "noble" goals to Santo and the scientist: Earth must disarm, on pain of destruction. "You're not the bosses of the universe!" Santo snaps. Argos tries to abduct Santo and Odorica, but --after a not very strenuous scuffle--Argos starts to choke and vanishes. He drops some pills before he goes, and Odorica later correctly identifies them as necessary for Martians to safely breathe Earth air. [Aliens' inability to breathe on Earth was a major point in *El planeta de las mujeres invasoras* as well.] It's odd that their hostages breathe Martian air inside the spaceship without any difficulty, though.

Meanwhile, Martians have been abducting apparently random people, including two families with children. [Note: Mario Sevilla and Consuelo Frank play one couple, who frankly look too old to be the parents of an adolescent boy and girl. Frank was in her mid-fifties at the time.] Later, they try to capture Professor Odorica (for his brains) and Santo (for his brawn), but also kidnap a science-fiction writer, an "industrialist," and a priest, among others. Why?



The Martian leader says their appearance frightens Earth people. "Why, when our bodies are more perfect and evolved than theirs?"

one of his female assistants remarks. But nothing will satisfy their leader except that everyone troops into the transformation chamber, where they're obscured by smoke and emerge without their helmets and space leotards (for men) and space bikinis (for women). Instead, they all have ancient Greek/Roman style costumes (briefly), and get appropriate names: Argos, Cronos, Morfeo, Afrodita, Selene, Artemisa, Diana, and Hercules. Some aren't pleased with their "disagreeable human form," although except for their headgear and hair they look the same as they did before.

Prof. Odorica tells Santo there are two ways to find the Martian spaceship: using a brain-wave detector (that looks suspiciously like a transistor radio) or stealing a Martian belt. Both of these will come into play later.

The rest of the film alternates scenes of Martians trying to kill/kidnap Santo (fails) and abducting various people (success). Most of the heavy abducting is done by the 4 Martian women, who show up at a fancy party and a restaurant in evening gowns to kidnap middle-aged men, then crash a testimonial dinner and replace the scheduled floor show and grab Odorica. Argos congratulates his

aides on their success, but admits he doesn't understand why Earth men are attracted to the sexy aliens. Selene agrees: "This appearance is repugnant." [Again, you look the same as you did before!]

Santo, meanwhile, is set upon by two of his wrestler buddies who've been hypnotised by the Martian babes, and later approached in his bedroom by two Martian ladies ("For a moment I was a victim of your charms..."). He wrestles a Martian who's impersonating a ring opponent--when the Martian's trick is exposed, the bout continues,



even though two other Martians disintegrate most of the spectators! [This sequence is over 10 minutes long.] (Curiously, the referee continues to supervise the death match for a while, before running away). Deciding this is the best way to trap the invaders, Santo arranges for another match in an empty arena. Argos and his henchmen appear and Santo has to fight them all. He tosses one Martian out of the ring, then steals his belt and teleports to the flying saucer. [Well, he lands in the woods nearby--it's unclear why usually the belts take you right inside the ship, but this time they don't.]

Inside the ship, the abductees have been treated fairly well, given concentrated food/drink pills, and so on. They stage a brief revolt but are overcome. The captive priest says "The Lord is the only one who can save us!" Or perhaps...El Santo?

Actually, the Martians more or less destroy themselves. Their determination to capture Santo caused them to remain on Earth too long--they run out of breathing pills,



and all drop dead. Before he dies, Argos tries to pull the (dangerously accessible) self-destruct switch, but fails. Once

the hostages are freed, Santo decides Earth isn't ready for Martian science, and throws the switch, escaping from the saucer seconds before it blows up.

The voiceover narrator who's been heard occasionally throughout the film wraps things up with a philosophical epilogue: "The human race has been saved for the

moment. Will man learn the lesson? Or will he insist on his crazy nuclear experiments until peace disappears from the Earth?" Santo walks away, leaving the former prisoners standing in the middle of the forest.

There are a number of entertaining aspects to this



picture, starting with the Martians themselves. Although at times they transform into normal-appearing Earthlings (remarking about how ugly this seems to Martian tastes), as Martians they apparently have big heads (they wear sort of oversized football helmets with a third "eye" in the forehead that disintegrates people; I'm not sure if this is supposed to be a real eye or just a weapon), and long blonde hair (perhaps screenwriter Rafael García Travesí had been reading some George Adamski). Since all of the male Martians are played by muscular wrestlers, and all of the female Martians are well-endowed women wearing skin-tight outfits, Mars is apparently some sort of giant health club planet.

The Martian leader Argos tells his crew "from now on we'll speak Spanish. It's the language of the country that's our destination; the Earthlings call it Mexico." Curiously, at least in his television broadcasts, Argos uses forms and conjugations not normally used in Mexico, including *vosotros*, *tomarais*, *estarais*, etc. Later on, not so much.

One somewhat clever running gag is the idea that the government of Mexico is suppressing news of the Martians to prevent panic. Characters discuss this, and at one point a television announcer falsely says "We're certain the Martians have returned to their planet." The voiceover narrator calls this "intensive propaganda," and it's effective, since people return to their "favourite diversions" (like attending wrestling matches). However, once the Martians go on their kidnap spree, the announcer returns to the air and warns people to stay home. A *cantina* empties out, and there are various shots of deserted city streets.

The film's low budget stretched to a couple of shots of the Martian saucer in space, one rather obvious miniature of the saucer landing in a forest, and the final explosion (in

which one shot is shown twice). A full-size mockup was made of part of the exterior of the saucer and the steps to go inside (if you can teleport in and out, why do you need steps?), in addition to the spacious but sterile interior (the main control room and the large but bare chamber where the abductees are kept). Other than the saucer and the disintegration and teleportation shots--simple to do--there aren't any special effects to speak of. One amusing aspect is the sound design: when the Martians "transport" themselves to various locations on Earth, their arrival is heralded by flashing lights, a train whistle, and a sort of "ka-boing!" So much for sneaking up on anybody.

General production values are adequate. The sets constructed at the San Ángel studios range from large-but-sterile to small-and-cramped (when Santo fights Argos in Odorica's lab, they can barely move for fear of crashing into a wall). The actual locations--the Arena México for the wrestling scenes, the sports complex--are a welcome change of pace from the otherwise mostly studio-bound film. [The sequence in which Santo trains in the "Club de Luchadores" and is then attacked by Eduardo Bonada and Frankenstein is curious: the training room could be a set, but when Santo leaves he goes through a hallway where a case filled with sports trophies can be seen, suggesting this is a real location (if not actually a club for wrestlers).]

One of the flaws (or assets, depending on your point of view) of *Santo... invasión de los marcianos* is the amount of time devoted to fights between Santo and the Martians or their surrogates (plus the regular wrestling match to lure the Martians to the arena towards the end of the film). Some of these are quite violent and exciting, but they (a) go on much too long and (b) don't really resolve anything (the Martians just vanish when they start to lose).



Trivia note: Santo loses his mask twice in this film. Once it is removed during a bout (however, he was definitely prepared for this eventuality, and is wearing another mask underneath!), and the other time it is taken off so Maura Monti and Eva Norvind can kiss him (this is only a hypnotically-induced fantasy, however). As in other films where similar things occur, Santo's face is never seen (he's shown from behind, and it probably isn't even Santo then).

Not a great film, but it has a certain camp entertainment value.

[A much shorter version of this review appeared in MFB 1/12 (1995).]



Marcianos vs Mexicanos [Martians vs. Mexicans] (Huevocartoon Prods.--Cinergistic Films--Televisa--Videocine, 2017*) "A Bad Hombres Production" *Exec Prod:* Cleo Segura Sherrel, J.D. Segura Jr., Mineko Mori, Rodolfo Riva Palacio Velasco, Gabriel Riva Palacio Alatraste, Rodolfo Riva Palacio Alatraste, Carlos Zepeda; *Prod/Dir/Scr:* **Gabriel Riva Palacio**, Rodolfo Riva Palacio; *Animation Dir:* Rafael Luna Esparza; *Lead Animator:* Mario R. Calva; *Film Ed:* Gabriel Riva Palacio Alatraste, Rodolfo Riva Palacio Alatraste, Julián Rivera Contreras; *Art Dir:* Jean Fraise; *Sound Design:* Alex de Icaza

*production began in 2015

Cast: Adal Ramones (*El Chacas* [*Felipe Reyes Menchaca*]), Omar Chaparro (*Martian King*), Martha Higareda (*Safiro*), Angélica Vale (*La Tlacoyito*), Eduardo Manzano (*don Calcaneco*), Humberto Velez (*The General*), Mario Filio (*The Bureaucrat*), Jaime Maussan (*himself*), Mónica Santacruz (*La Joselyn*), Ricardo Hill (*TV anc*), Fernando Meza (*El Nene*; *Doña Chocho*; *El Cubano*; *Juan*), Gabriel Riva Palacio Alatraste (*Jacinto*; *El Frijol*; *La Niña*; *El Chino*; *Nerd*), Rodolfo Riva Palacio Alatraste (*El Talachas*; *El Poli*; *El MiRey*; *Martian soldier*)

Notes: *Marcianos vs mexicanos* is a fairly entertaining animated feature which apparently did not do very well at the box-office (playing only 2 weeks in Mexico City in March 2018) and receiving lukewarm reviews at best. It's hard to imagine anyone outside of Mexico who'd appreciate all of the insider humour, but there are also some weird references aimed at...? For example, there is a running gag about a Martian version of famous television art instructor Bob Ross (his show ceased production in 1994 and he died in 1995, but the program has been shown in re-runs since), and while his series may have aired in Mexico, is Ross's meme-ish fame that widespread? An example of a very Mexico-centric reference is the live-action presence of Jaime Maussan, a popular Mexican journalist and UFO-expert: he pops up from time to time to comment on the story, but unless you know who he is, his appearances are sort of pointless.

The film begins with a *Star Wars*-inspired scroll-up printed prologue. "The Republic is in danger...the Mexican Republic..." due to *gasolinazos* (a scandal about increases in the price of gasoline), "corruption in the government...fools who get famous on YouTube," etc. The spaceship "Frijolero" comes into view, and protagonist El Chacas introduces his extended family and friends who are traveling to Mars: grandfather Calcaneco, grandmother doña Chocho, mother La Tlaycoyito, handyman father El Talachas, sexy sister Safiro and her 5 children (all by different fathers), drunken uncle El Cumbias, policeman friend El Poli, selfie-mad neighbour El MiRey, and best friend El Nene. The family runs a restaurant in Mexico City, but El Chacas explains how they got where they are...

NASA's Mars Rover discovers a hidden Martian civilisation. Because the traditional Martian salute is a raised middle finger, and their language is mostly variations on the word *puto* (a homophobic slur in Spanish), the Rover's controllers on Earth feel they're being insulted, so the Rover opens fire (!). The Martians destroy the Rover and the Martian King decides to wipe out humanity--after a protest by bleeding-heart liberal Martians, he agrees to only encase everyone in what appears to be strawberry jello. [The King uses the verb *congelar* which normally means "freeze," but apparently it can also mean "congeal."] U.S. President Donald Trump says "I will build a wall between our planet and Mars. It's gonna be tremendous!" but he and the rest of the world is soon conquered. Except Mexico.

In Mexico, El Chacas and his family rescue El Cumbias, who's been abducted and is about to be "probed" by the Martians. They also destroy the invasion fleet mother ship. It's like "Independence Day...not the 5th of May, the 16th of September." How do they avoid being trapped in jello? Flatulence. El Chacas and his family are feted as heroes. Mexico erects a wall to keep fleeing

gringos out. [In a confusing bit, Donald Trump is then shown trying to swim the Rio Grande, shouting "I demand that you let me in!" before being eaten by an alligator. The two versions of Trump look quite different, suggesting the "presidential" version was added later (after his election in 2016), but the original Rio Grande gag was retained.]



In Area 51, the General and the Bureaucrat learn Mexico is the only country on Earth not under Martian domination. Scientists ascertain that the Mexicans' unique biology--the result of their diet, living in a polluted environment, etc.--makes them immune to Martian weapons. El Chacas and his friends and family agree to save the Earth (in exchange for the USA ceding Disneyland to Mexico). They're sent to Mars to destroy the Martian King, but forget to take along the bomb that would make this possible. Instead, they land on Mars and use their "Mexican" abilities to disarm the King, force a (fraudulent) election in which El Chacas is chosen President of Mars, and save Earth from the Martian death ray (Safiro's children use it to blow up Saturn instead). El Chacas and the others are heroes once more, Earth and Mars become friends, and everyone on Earth is freed from jello (except Donald Trump, who remains *congelado* at the request of his own people).



Some criticism has been leveled at *MvM* due to its depiction of Mexico and its people. Most of the Mexicans shown are stereotyped to some extent, and these aren't all necessarily favourable images. However, there's little here that's not been seen before in Mexican cinema and television, and reflects a certain pride in the resilience of the "Mexican" character, and a belief they can ultimately triumph over *gringos* and others because of this.

The two main *gringo* roles are the General and the Bureaucrat (I'm not sure how the latter is credited in

Mexico; he's an African American character who wears a suit and helps organise the expedition to Mars). The General is a little more flamboyant and irascible (he's the one who orders the Mars Rover to attack the Martians as a response to their disrespect); he has a low opinion of Mexico but is not a villain or even an overt racist. There's a running gag throughout the film involving a supposed romantic relationship between the General and a young scientist (the Nerd)--the General repeatedly denies it, but at the end (when everyone is being doted in a ticker-tape victory parade) the General allows the Nerd to hold his hand.



Overall, *gringos* are portrayed as technologically advanced but also rather easily fooled and manipulated.

MvM has many contemporary references and in-jokes, including cameos from Jaime Maussan, Donald Trump, Batman & Robin, the Martian Bob Ross, and so on. MiRey is forever snapping selfies (not that funny). There's a curious joke (that I don't entirely understand) about stolen parts of a Martian spaceship being sold in Argentina. Also unclear is the Martian King's propensity for suddenly and involuntarily changing into various Mexican characters (*charro*, etc.).

Almost as an aside, the film includes a sub-plot or moral about El Chacas and his desire to be something he isn't. This is very peripheral to the plot: it's introduced early, as El Chacas dresses up to meet his would-be girlfriend La Joselyn only to be rejected. Later, there are some passing comments about being proud of who you are, and that El Chacas and the others triumph over the Martians after embracing their *mexicanidad*, but this is not really developed in any consistent detail. As with the previously noted, contradictory



appearances of Donald Trump, it feels like this "be yourself" theme fell prey to revisions and possibly editing.

MvM is primarily drawn animation (as opposed to CGI). The design of the film is satisfactory, as are the technical aspects overall. Animation director Rafael Luna Esparza had previously worked on *Una película de huevos* and *Un gallo con muchos huevos* for the Huevocartoons company. Voice acting is fine, with the major roles going to film and TV performers Adal Ramones, Angélica Vale, Martha Higareda, Omar Chaparro and Eduardo Manzano.

Not bad, but with limited appeal outside of Mexico.



BLUE DEMON VS. MONSTERS



Blue Demon--el demonio azul (Filmica Vergara Cinecomisiones, 1965) *Exec Prod:* Jorge García Besné; *Prod:* Luis Enrique Vergara Cabrera; *Dir:* Chano Urueta; *Scr:* Rafael García Travesí; *Story:* Rafael García Travesí, Fernando Osés; *Photo:* Alex Phillips Jr.; *Music:* Jorge Pérez Herrera; *Prod Chief:* José Rodríguez G.; *Asst Dir:* Ángel Rodríguez; *Film Ed:* Juan José Munguía; *Art Dir:* Gerardo Aguilera R.; *Camera Op:* Dagobied Rodríguez; *Masks/Special Makeup:* [Antonio] Neira; *Makeup:* Armando Islas; *Dialog Rec:* Guillermo Mateos; *Music/Re-rec:* Heinrich Henkel; *Rec:* Ricardo Saldívar; *Sound Ed:* J.J. Munguía; *Unions:* STIC-ANDA

Cast: Blue Demon, Jaime Fernández (*Lauro Carral*), Rosa María Vázquez (*Marina Gruber*), Mario Orea (*Prof. Gruber*), César Gay (*Dr. Rafael*), Fernando Osés (*El Sanguinario*), Altia Michel (*waitress*), Guillermo Hernández (*"Lobo Negro" (Ursus)*), Dick Medrano, [Henry] Pilusso, Joe Carson, Víctor Jordán, Ivonne Govea, Margarito Luna (*Matías*), Miguel Funes, Nathanael León Moreno, Carlos Suárez (*Inspector*), Jesús Gómez (*spectator at match*)

Notes: this was Blue Demon's first starring role, after cameos in several wrestling films. Producer Vergara at this time had both Blue Demon and El Santo under contract, and in fact Santo makes a guest appearance in the second Blue Demon film, *Blue Demon contra el poder satánico*. *Blue Demon--el demonio azul* is a very uneven film, cheaply and somewhat sloppily made, but with a few redeeming aspects. Blue Demon himself starts out much the same way Santo did, as a *deus ex machina* who shows up a few times but is not really the central character of the film. The best wrestler-actor in the movie is Guillermo

Hernández, who has several good scenes in which to display his abilities as an actor (of course, he had been acting since the '50s and didn't wear a mask, so he did have several advantages over the novice Blue Demon).

A werewolf (whose "howl" sounds like a yodel) attacks and kills two young people in a forest. Although he barely touches them, and their bodies clearly show no signs of blood or violence, the authorities later deduce that a "beast" must have committed the crimes due to the horrible wounds (so they say) that were inflicted. Local sheriff Matías says similar crimes occurred more than 50 years earlier. Professor Gruber and his friend Blue Demon investigate: Blue fights the werewolf and tosses him off a "cliff" (a little ravine is more like it). The dead monster turns out to be the missing wrestler El Salvaje ("The Savage," an apt name). Gruber and Blue search through an old castle in the forest but don't find the hidden laboratory of Lauro Carral. Lauro, the sweetheart of Gruber's daughter Marina, is the grandson of Fernando Salgarola, who in 1909 experimented with a chemical derived from the mandrágora plant which turned men into wolf-men. Lauro is trying to replicate his grandfather's experiments, although he can't find his predecessor's second volume of notes. He is assisted by wrestlers El Sanguinario and Ursus.



Lauro convinces El Sanguinario to allow himself to be injected with the chemical, swearing that it will only give him super-strength and allow him to defeat Blue Demon in the ring. But El Sanguinario undergoes a transformation into a wolfman in the middle of the match, and runs away (what happens to him, we don't know). When Ursus wisely balks at becoming the next guinea pig, Lauro takes the chemical himself. Locked in a cell, he transforms into a monster and then returns to normal. He discovers a hidden room which contains his grandfather's skeleton and the second volume of his diary: Fernando couldn't control the transformations and killed himself to protect others. Later, while strolling through the forest with a sexy waitress from the local cafe, Lauro feels himself beginning

to change, and sends the woman away. She goes home but wolfman Lauro appears and kills her. [This is an odd scene, which appears to have been cut: there are several shots of the woman in her room, a brief shot of Lauro's bestial face peeking in her window, and then a sudden cut to the next day, as the authorities discuss the woman's murder.]



Ursus kidnaps Prof. Gruber to help Lauro with his experiments. Blue Demon shows up and Ursus knocks him out, but is in turn killed by wolfman Lauro. After a fight, Blue tosses Lauro off the same "cliff" as the other monster, but this time the wolfman doesn't die, and manages to grab Marina, who is out with a posse searching for her father. So Blue has to fight him all over again, and once more tosses him off the cliff! Lauro returns to his human form and is shot to death by Matías (after which Marina starts screaming "Don't shoot!" -- too late!).

On the positive side, the wolfman makeup in *Blue Demon--el demonio azul* isn't bad: it was created by Antonio Neira, who also did the monster makeup/masks for *La bruja*, *Misterios de la magia negra*, and *El castillo de los monstruos*. The first two wolfmen (El Salvaje and El Sanguinario) use the same furry mask (curiously, when El Sanguinario transforms in the ring, only his head and



hands get hairy), but Lauro's makeup is completely different (except for a couple of strange, mismatched shots in the sequence when he kills Ursus), more closely resembling an ape face (and this seems to be a much more flexible mask and/or facial makeup than the first wolfman mask). Both El Sanguinario and Lauro have intermediate makeup stages.

[It's amusing to note that the original poster and lobby cards for *Blue Demon--el demonio azul* use an image of

the monster from *The Werewolf* (1956), while jumbo lobby cards for a re-release instead "borrow" an image of the titular character from *The Curse of the Werewolf* (1961).]

Another good point, mentioned earlier, is the character of "Ursus" and Lobo Negro's performance as the same. After Lauro has transformed into a wolfman and back again, he tells Ursus to let him out of the cell. Ursus, who has watched in horror, is understandably reluctant to unlock the cell, but Lauro finally convinces him. Later, Lobo Negro has a great scene, laughing and drinking and taunting the imprisoned Professor Gruber. Fernando Osés, who seems to be doing his own dialogue in this film (he's dubbed in most Santo movies), has a smaller part but is also fine. He's dubious about allowing himself to be injected with Lauro's chemical, but eventually talks himself into it. Ursus encourages him; when El Sanguinario says, "Well, why don't you take the shot?" Ursus replies, "Because I'm not as brave as you!" and laughs.

Negative aspects include the very clumsy physical action: none of the tussles between Blue Demon and the wolfmen are exciting or well-staged, and (as noted earlier) the opening monster assault is horribly botched. The music is also poorly matched with the on-screen action, or absent entirely in certain scenes which could have used it.

Verdict: shoddy but entertaining.

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La sombra del Murciélago [Shadow of the Bat] (Vergara/Columbia, 1966) Prod: Luis Enrique Vergara G.*; Dir: Federico Curiel*; Scr: Jesús "Murciélago" Velázquez; Orig Idea: Luis Enrique Vergara C.*; Photo: Eduardo Valdéz; Music: Jorge Pérez Herrera***; Music Arr: Armando Manzanero; Songs: Armando Manzanero (1), Federico Curiel (1), Álvaro Carrillo (1); Prod Mgr: Raúl Manjárez; Chief of Tech Unit: José Rodríguez Rivera; Asst Dir: Ángel Rodríguez; Film Ed: Raúl Caso

[sic]; *Art Dir*: [Arcadi] Artis Gener; *Special FX*: Ricardo Sainz; *Makeup*: Armando Islas; *Music/Re-rec*: Salvador Topete; *Dialog Rec*: Jesús Sánchez; *Costumes*: Bertha Mendoza López; *Union*: STIC-ANDA

*is this a typo or two different people?

** allegedly Curiel fell ill during shooting, and Luis Enrique Vergara and Fernando A. Rivero filled in during his absence

*** much of the background score is from the "Themes from Horror Movies" LP, which includes music from *House of Frankenstein*, *The Mole People*, *Horror of Dracula*, etc.

Cast: Jaime Fernández (*Daniel*), Marta Romero (*Marta*), Blue Demon (*himself*), Fernando Osés (*Murciélagos*), Mario Orea (*police commander*), Gerardo Cepeda (*Gerardo*), [Jesús] "Murciélagos" Velázquez (*wrestling trainer*), René Barrera (*henchman 1*), Marco Antonio Arzate (*henchman 2*), Enriqueta Reza (*Cirila Campos*), Eduardo Bonada (*wrestler who is kidnaped*), José Loza (*Mario, detective*), Juan Garza, Vicente Lara "Cacama" (*henchman 3*), Víctor Jordán, María Antonieta Olvera (*Aida*), Alejandro Cruz? (*Blue Demon's first ring opponent*), César Gay (*César, police employee*)

Notes: For a brief period of time, producer Luis Enrique Vergara had both El Santo and Blue Demon under contract, then lost them both to other companies. He compensated by hiring Mil Máscaras and then Hollywood stars Boris Karloff, John Carradine, Jeffrey Hunter, and Nick Adams. *La sombra del Murciélagos* was Blue Demon's next-to-last Vergara film (shot in February 1966; *Arañas infernales* was filmed in July); he moved on to Cinematográfica RA in the fall of that year.

Written by former professional wrestler turned actor-screenwriter Jesús "Murciélagos" Velázquez, the picture conflates Murciélagos's own wrestling career and *The Phantom of the Opera* in a strange but generally entertaining fashion. Most of Vergara's Santo and Blue Demon features were made cheaply and on the margins of the industry, but their very cheapness gives them an eerie verisimilitude. Sets were extremely cramped and almost abstract in their décor and lighting. Actual locations used in the shooting



are interesting to look at--the absence of passersby suggests at least some of these were on a studio backlot somewhere, but it's unclear if this was the América studios or not. Like *Arañas infernales*, *La sombra del Murciélagos*'s music score features numerous tracks from the "Themes from Horror Movies" LP (available from an ad in "Famous Monsters of Filmland" magazine, where I got my copy back in the Sixties); Marta Romero also does 3 songs, which waste some time but aren't horrible.

El Murciélagos is a former professional wrestler who now lives in a spooky mansion, plays music on the organ, and wrestles his flunky Gerardo and various *luchadores* who've been kidnaped to serve as his opponents. "Only wrestling and music calm my nerves!" Murciélagos retired from the ring after his face was disfigured, and now wears his "bat" mask all the time. He tells Gerardo that wrestling is mentioned in the Bible and is "almost sacred." After watching Marta sing on television (actually, she's performing in a tiny nightclub and it's hard to figure out where the camera would be, or why her show would be broadcast at all), Murciélagos orders his henchmen to abduct her. However, they're foiled by Daniel, Marta's boyfriend. When the men return, Murciélagos orders them punished, and Gerardo gives them a choice: "the bat room or the rat pit!"

[These two henchmen--a third is later seen in Murciélagos's lair--have very strange makeup on their faces, which makes them look like zombies or something. At the very end of the movie, Murciélagos makes a brief and vague allusion to them also being former wrestlers who were disfigured in the ring.]

Gerardo tries to abduct Marta himself, attacking the singer and Daniel when they leave the club. However, Blue Demon drives up in his hardtop Mustang and chases Murciélagos's henchman off. Oddly enough, neither Daniel nor Marta knows who Blue Demon is, but the police commander later informs them that he's a professional wrestler and a fighter for justice. They go to see him wrestle in the Arena Coliseo and later visit him in his dressing room (which, oddly enough, has a poster for the Blue Demon movie *El poder satánico* on the wall). Murciélagos has sent Gerardo to kidnap Blue Demon to serve as an opponent in his home wrestling-ring, but the presence of Daniel and Marta scares him off. However, Gerardo does drop a leaf in the hallway (for unexplained reasons we see him periodically chewing on one) and this is a...clue! Blue Demon meets with the police and they suggest a wrestler might be behind the series of skull-fracturing murders. Retired wrestler Murciélagos is suggested as a suspect, but no one knows where he is now.

Episode 2: *La cueva siniestra* [The Sinister Cave] Blue takes the leaf to Cirila, a witch-like woman who specialises in medicinal plants. She says it has mysterious powers, but won't reveal where it grows. Next stop is a visit with a retired wrestler (played by screenwriter Velázquez) who says wrestler Murciélagos's face was horribly scarred when he was thrown from the ring into the arena seats, and he subsequently went mad and left the country. The veteran shows Blue Demon the signature hold of Murciélagos: "La Noria." Later, they learn Murciélagos returned to Mexico 5 years before, but his current whereabouts are unknown.



Back at the nightclub, young people (mostly women, actually) dance to a recording of “Bule Bule,” the Spanish-language cover of “Woolly Bully” (probably Los Rockin’ Devils version), then Marta sings Álvaro Carrillo’s big hit “La Mentira.” Daniel leaves to meet with Blue Demon and the police, but Marta has a police bodyguard to protect her. This doesn’t stop Gerardo, who knocks out the cop, strangles Marta’s maid Aida, and carries her back to Murciélagos’s hideout.

Murciélagos declares his love but Marta just screams and says “You’re crazy!” She also screams when she sees rats, and unfortunately for her, the dungeons (and tunnels) beneath Murciélagos’s house are just full of rats.

Episode 3: *La furia del Murciélagos* [Fury of the Bat] Gerardo abducts a wrestler and brings him back to wrestle

his master. Murciélagos defeats his opponent and hallucinates a cheering crowd. Although he’s told to take the man back to the city, Gerardo murders him

instead, explaining that his father was killed by a “strong man” when Gerardo was a child, so now he murders wrestlers in revenge.

Blue Demon, with the help of a friend, recalls where he’s seen the strange plant before: in a rural area between Mexico City and Guadalajara. He and Daniel go there, rather easily finding Murciélagos’s hideout nearby. They enter the house and descend into the tunnels beneath. Meanwhile, Murciélagos unmasks before Marta, and she screams (again). He locks her up in a cell with all the other women who rejected him.

After some extended fighting between Blue Demon, Daniel, and Murciélagos’s three henchmen, Blue Demon is finally taken to the villain’s wrestling room. They wrestle, Blue wins. Daniel finds Marta’s cell and another fight breaks out (in a very narrow space), between Daniel, Blue, Gerardo, and the henchmen. Murciélagos, a sore loser, shows up with a pistol but Blue opens the trapdoor of the rat pit and Murciélagos plunges in to his death. The prisoners are freed but the dungeon-tunnel complex catches on fire and only Blue, Daniel and Marta escape (Blue repeatedly tries to go back in--to save the other women, presumably--but the flames are too strong). Finally, without another word, Blue, Daniel and Marta walk away from the burning building. The end.

La sombra del Murciélagos is pretty entertaining in many ways, but Blue Demon takes a backseat to Murciélagos and his antics (Blue doesn’t appear until about the 20-minute mark). Since this wasn’t Blue Demon’s first starring movie, it is rather unusual that he isn’t presented as a well-known figure and doesn’t dominate the screen.

He only has one arena wrestling match (at the Arena Coliseo--his unnamed opponent looks rather like Blue’s tag-team partner Alejandro Cruz, although this is speculation) and virtually no character development (he is seen shooting pool, though). Much more footage is devoted to Murciélagos, with substantial time given to Gerardo, as well as Marta (and Daniel). Marta Romero’s three songs are two too many, and the “Bule Bule” sequence is blatant padding.



The plot has some major holes--how does Murciélagos pay for the upkeep of his hideout, for one thing--but there are some weird aspects as well. The revelation that Murciélagos has a whole room full of captive women is surprising, as is Gerardo’s back story. Murciélagos is obviously insane, hallucinating cheering crowds, and this is fairly standard, but...where did he learn to play the organ? The sequence featuring yerbera Cirila is almost completely pointless, and ends with Blue Demon basically being thrown out of her house without learning anything, although it does bring in the concept of a magic plant with a woman-shaped root, and towards the end of the movie we see Murciélagos trying to use this to bewitch Marta (it doesn’t work). Why Gerardo habitually chews on the plant’s leaves is never explained.

The film does have plenty of action, although most of it is back-loaded in the latter half. The fights between Blue, Daniel, and Murciélagos’s henchmen aren’t very exciting--and are hampered by taking place on extremely cramped sets--but the actual wrestling between Murciélagos and (at various times) Gerardo, Blue, and Eduardo Bonada is fast and furious (as is Blue’s arena match).

The monster makeup for Murciélagos’s face is competently horrifying, even if it’s difficult to understand how falling out of a wrestling ring and hitting a row of seats would cause such injuries. Curiously, when Murciélagos is unmasked and is ranting and raving (and rasslin’), he reminds one somewhat of Roberto Cañedo in



Santo vs. el Estrangulador and *El espectro del Estrangulador*, both in appearance and (crazy) demeanour.

La sombra del Murciélago isn't a great film but it—like many of the Vergara films—is highly eccentric in form and content, and thus worth a look.



Arañas infernales [Infernal Spiders] (Filmica Vergara Cinecomisiones/Columbia, 1966) *Prod:* Luis Enrique Vergara G.; *Dir:* Federico Curiel; *Scr:* Adolfo Torres Portillo; *Orig. Idea:* L.E. Vergara; *Photo:* Eduardo Valdéz; *Music:* Jorge Pérez Herrera; *Prod Mgr:* Raúl Manjarrez; *Asst Dir:* Ángel Rodríguez; *Film Ed:* José Juan Munguía; *Chief of Tech. Unit:* José Rodríguez Rivera; *Art Dir:* Artis Gener; *Makeup:* Armando Islas; *Dialog Rec:* Jesús Sánchez; *Music/Re-rec:* Salvador Topete; *Union:* STIC-ANDA

Cast: Blue Demon (*himself*), Blanca Sánchez (*Hilda*), Martha Elena Cervantes (*Arianec*), Ramón Bugarini (*Lt. Robles*), Sergio Virel (*José*), Jéssica Munguía, Fernando Osés (*Prince Arac*), Frankenstein (*Moloc*), René Barrera (*spider man*), Enrique Ramírez, Vicente Lara “Cacama” (*spider man*), Juan Garza and Marco Antonio Arzate (*wrestlers*), José Luis Fernández (*Cámbaro, janitor*), Octavio Muñoz, José E. Vergara A.

Notes: long unseen, this long-lost Blue Demon movie finally surfaced on Mexican TV a few years ago. It is pretty wild, although the overall impact is definitely hampered by some poor effects work (i.e., the “giant” spider that is central to the plot!). Speaking of effects work, *Arañas infernales* uses stock footage from two Hollywood sci-fi movies of the 1950s—those enduring classics, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* and *Teenagers from Outer Space*! Certainly a list of the 10-worst science fiction films of the decade would include these two titles, but Vergara “borrowed” footage from them! And yet, the scenes aren’t that bad and are more or less seamlessly integrated.

Speaking of borrowing, Jorge Pérez Herrera’s music score is liberally sprinkled with cuts from the “Themes

from Horror Movies” LP, just as he did in *La Sombra del Murciélago* earlier in the year. The “music” under the main titles is strange electronic noises, rather effective and different.

The movie opens with an offscreen narrator declaiming about the vastness of space, inhabited by strange beings on other worlds. One such world (referred to as a “galaxy” for some reason) is Arácnia, whose residents have been desperately searching for a source of food to save the life of their queen (a big spider). Earth is chosen, since human brains are apparently like health food for alien spiders. Their (*Plan 9* footage) saucer lands (*Teenagers* footage, including the disintegration of a barking dog), causing Blue Demon’s car to stop operating. When power resumes, Blue and his pal José spot another car on the road, but the driver has been reduced to a smoking skeleton (wearing an unharmed suit)! Although José is introduced as an engineering student, it’s up to Blue Demon to suggest a reason for this phenomenon—it involves neutrinos, anti-matter, and the loss of equilibrium leading to the spontaneous combustion of human beings. Later, the police—represented by Lt. Robles—scoff at this idea. However, Robles, José, José’s girlfriend Hilda, and Blue Demon go out to the countryside where the dead man’s car was found and use a radiation detector to try and track the source.



The “source” is the aliens’ hideout, located in the catacombs under an old hacienda. The spider-people are led by the busty but petulant Arianec, who sends her henchmen out to find “healthy, clean brains” for the shrill, demanding queen (located in a big web in the basement). A young woman is brought back as a victim. Tossed into the web, she screams when the “big” spider grabs her. [Two versions of the queen spider were constructed: one, apparently a big puppet or a man-in-suit (whose eyes light

up), is used sparingly and only vaguely seen. The other, shown when the queen creeps along the web, is obviously very small—not to mention dopey-looking—and is probably the same as the spider-hand that appears later in the movie. The second spider is never effectively shot to appear large, and does not in the least resemble the big puppet/suit.]

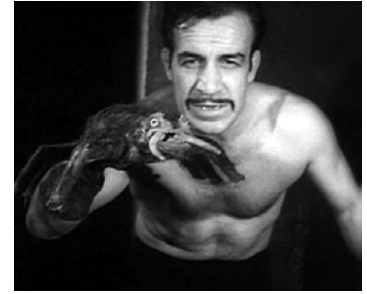


Arianec spots Blue and his pals on a kind of alien TV set (the aliens' HQ in the hacienda is filled with what appear to be balloons or globes, some that slide like abacus beads on rods, an interesting concept that actually does seem "alien"). A paralyzing ray disables the Earthlings, who are then attacked by two spider-men. After a long fight, the aliens vanish, unable to defeat Blue Demon. As a result, Arianec calls the mother ship for reinforcements, and Prince Arac's flying saucer heads for Earth. Arianec also personally attempts to kill a sleeping Hilda, but the young woman wakes up, grabs a pistol, and shoots the spider-woman's hand. Arianec flees, leaving behind her weapon (a kind of wand that shoots powder) and blood on the floor. Shaken, Hilda does what anyone would do after such a horrible, life-threatening experience—she goes back to bed! (and pulls the covers over her head)



Blue Demon discovers the wrestling arena janitor is actually a spider-man spy. However, Arianec turns her henchman into a smoking skeleton by remote control to keep him from talking. Prince Arac arrives on Earth (*Teenagers* footage). He defeats three wrestlers at once, and is signed up by impresario Méndez, who has dollar signs in his eyes. Hilda trails spider-man Moloc back to the hacienda, wanders around in the catacombs for a long time (nearly getting caught by the queen), and—just as she's leaving—is confronted by Arac. He hypnotizes her into forgetting everything, then lets her leave (why?).

Arac meets Blue Demon in the ring. When things go bad, Arac's right hand turns into a spider (yes, a spider with arms, eyes, and fangs, attached to the end of Arac's arm! What's so odd about that?). He tries to bite Blue Demon, but fails (although Lt. Robles, surprisingly, is fatally bitten), then flees. José and Hilda are kidnaped from the arena and taken to spider-people HQ. Hilda's tossed into the web to be a



snack for the queen, while José's head is cut so his blood can be tested (this is shot from below a glass table, and blood drips onto it, a curiously gruesome and painful scene). The aliens have decided to leave unhospitable Earth. Blue shows up, rescues José and Hilda, fighting Arac (who still has that spider-hand) and the others. The aliens take off in their flying saucer (*Teenagers* footage), but Blue manipulates the giant sliding-ball controls in the catacomb HQ room and the spaceship bursts into flame and blows up (*Plan 9* footage). Earth is saved! Hooray!

Arañas infernales is wacky and only the awkward puppet spiders really prevent it from being a satisfactorily weird experience. Blue Demon is in great physical shape and projects a strong, assertive personality. The location shooting is atmospheric and creepy (Curiel and cinematographer Valdéz apparently realized shadows can hide a lot of defects) and the film is certainly not dull. But man, those dumb spider puppets...

[Originally reviewed in **MFB 16/5** (2010); revised slightly for this issue.]



THE DEVIL MADE ME DO IT

Mi alma por un amor* [My Soul for Love]

(Técnicos y Manuales, 1963) *Exec Prod:* Angélica Ortiz; *Dir:* Rafael Baledón; *Scr:* José María Fernández Unzaín [sic]; *Photo:* José Ortiz Ramos; *Music Dir:* Sergio Guerrero; *Songs:* Armando Manzanero, Luis Demetrio; *Prod Co-ord:* J. Durán Chávez; *Prod Chief:* Alberto Ferrer; *Sub-Dir:* Américo Fernández; *Film Ed:* Carlos Savage; *Art Dir:* Ramón R[odríguez] Granada; *Decor:* Raúl Serrano; *Choreog:* Edmundo Mendoza; *Camera Op:* José Carrasco; *Lighting:* Gabriel Castro; *Titles:* Ángel Quiroz; *Makeup:* Margarita Ortega; *Sound Supv:* James Fields; *Sound Engin:* Javier Mateos; *Union:* STPC

*[video release: *Amantes del infierno* (although this title is only on the box and label; the film itself is unchanged)]

Cast: Enrique Guzmán (*Faustino*), Angélica María (*Marga*), Manolo Muñoz (*El Diablo*), Sonia Infante (*Ángela*), David Reynoso (*Marga's godfather*), Edmundo Mendoza (*Anacleto, soda jerk*), Ramón Valdés (*film*)

director), Victorio Blanco (*book buyer*), Federico del Castillo (*Apolonio*), Lena y Lola (*singers*)

Notes: this is a fairly pleasant musical fantasy which benefits from a good performance by Manolo Muñoz as a devil (not the Devil, however), Angélica María at her cutest, and some nice tunes. However, there are few things that are just a little off about the picture.



For example, the cast and characterizations are very skimpy, almost schematic. David Reynoso's character doesn't even have a name for heaven's sake! Angélica María is supposedly a college student (although she says her greatest ambition is to meet the love of her life and get married--we used to call that being a "pre-wed major") but we never see her in class (she makes a passing reference to studying, but the only person we really see studying is Sonia Infante, who isn't even a student, she's an angel!) or with any friends (aside from the anonymous patrons of her godfather's soda fountain, and I do mean anonymous--there are no recognizable faces in the bunch at all). Enrique Guzmán is an old man who falls in love with Angélica María's character, but we are never told how he first met or saw her, and we don't know what his story is, who he is, what he did for a living, etc.

The sets are an odd mixture of "realistic" (the soda fountain, the apartments lived in by the principals) and "surrealistic" (the movie studio, the fancy restaurant), with a few actual locations tossed in. While the music is OK, there are 13 musical numbers in a 90-minute film, which limits the amount of plot that could be squeezed in; a couple of songs, such as the performance by Lena y Lola and an early instrumental in the soda fountain, could have been chopped with no problem. The performers' agents

must have been working overtime when preparing the film: Guzmán has 3 solo numbers, as does Angélica María, and they share a duet; Manolo Muñoz has 2 solos and is part of a trio on another number with Guzmán and Angélica María. Even non-singer Sonia Infante has a solo dance number!

The elderly Faustino falls in love with Marga, a college student who works part-time in her godfather's soda fountain. Faustino sells his rare books to buy her flowers (she thinks he's wealthy), and the two become friends. However, he knows he is much too old for her. In frustration, he says he'd sell his soul for Marga's love. Suddenly, a youthful devil (wearing a leather jacket and two little "horns" of hair) appears in a puff of smoke, and sings a song that begins "I'm the devil, Lucifer..." He offers to make a deal: in exchange for his soul, for six months Faustino will have youth, wealth, and Marga's love. Faustino tries to hold out for more, but the devil says Faustino will probably die in six months anyway--this way, at least he will die happy! The old man signs, and is magically made young. He convinces the devil to give him the power to sing, and this singing ability attracts Marga's attention. Faustino also buys the soda fountain from her godfather for one million pesos just so he will have someplace to hang out (this deal is a secret).

Meanwhile, Marga's wish for a roommate is answered by the appearance of Ángela. She is actually Marga's guardian angel (and cleans up the bathroom by merely blinking her eyes; this came before the *Bewitched* TV series!). The devil convinces Faustino that he can't waste time trying to woo Marga in the traditional manner, suggesting the use of a love potion instead. To prove the potion works, the devil sprays it on separate portraits of John F. Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev, who "pop" out of their frames and embrace! But when the devil spikes Marga's drink ("zarzaparrilla," the "favorite soft drink of don Porfirio," as Faustino puts it) at the soda fountain, Ángela switches glasses and the devil gets the potion instead. He instantly falls in love with Ángela! For the rest of the film he follows her around, professing his love (she knocks him out several times). In one scene, they have a magical duel, changing a caged canary into a parrot, dove, and vulture, then back to a canary! "Who are you?" Ángela asks. "Who are you?" the devil replies.

Meanwhile, time is running out for Faustino. Marga is hired to appear in a movie, but quits when she discovers Faustino is the producer. She agrees to marry Apolonio, her former boyfriend (a college football player). However, Faustino shows up and offers Apolonio money to "take a trip around the world...alone." As Marga looks on indignantly, Apolonio turns down one, two, three million pesos. But when Faustino raises the ante to five million, Apolonio takes it and tells Marga: "Sorry, my love, but this swine has succeeded in corrupting me!" Faustino then asks Marga to marry him, and she agrees. However, she sets the wedding day for (unbeknownst to her) the day after Faustino is scheduled to go to Hell.

Ángela steps in to save the day. She agrees to go on a date with the devil, and keeps him out past the midnight



deadline, invalidating the contract. Enrique and Marga are married. The devil shows up at the church: he's been fired. His boss (Satan) was so mad, "he told me to go to...Heaven!" "It's not so bad, I live there," Ángela tells him, and they vanish together.



Manolo Muñoz is the most amusing aspect of *Mi alma por un amor*. At times he really appears to be imitating "Loco" Valdes, but has the advantage of being able to sing and is a more suitable romantic partner for Sonia Infante than the prematurely-balding Valdes would have been. He also gets some good lines: when speaking to his "master" on the telephone (Ángela also reports to her boss--God--on the phone), he signs off by saying "A diablo" (instead of "Adiós"), and later says "Satanás me libre" in place of "Dios me libre." Sonia Infante is OK, but for some reason her hair, costumes, and makeup seem contrived to make her appear rather unattractive, until the nightclub scene when she is glamorized. Guzmán is satisfactory both as the old (buried under makeup, a gray wig and beard) and young (his usual appearance) Faustino, while Angélica María is cute and spunky although her role is not written very effectively.

Originally appeared in MFB 7/4



El violador infernal [The Infernal Rapist] (Prods. Eco Films/Esco-Mex, © 1988) Exec Prod: Ernesto Fuentes; Dir: Damián Acosta; Story: Cristóbal Martell;

Orig. Idea: Ulises Pérez Aguirre; Photo: Armando Castellón; Music: Rafael Garrido; Prod Mgr: León Ocampo; Co-Dir: Pepe Medina; Film Ed: Max Sánchez; Camera Op: Silvano Zúñiga; Re-rec: Ricardo Saldívar; Union: STIC

Cast: Noé Murayama (Carlos "El Gato"), La Princesa Lea (Maribel), Ana Luisa Pelufo [sic] (Supreme Being of Darkness), Marisol Cervantes (masseuse), Manuel "Flaco" Ibáñez (police commander), Bruno Rey (district attorney), Arturo Massón (gay victim), Viviana Olivia, Ramón Blanco, Blanca Nieves, Juan Moro (Moro, police agent), Ramón Gaona, [José] Luis Avendaño (police agent in park), Atala Uranga, Fidel Abrego Terroba, Martín Luis Quintana, Eduardo Guzmán, Héctor Gaytán, Julio D'Johny, Damián Acosta (priest)

Notes: very distasteful film, crudely made and apparently deliberately intended to be offensive (we see rape, murder, homosexual sodomy, lesbianism, drug and alcohol abuse, Satanism, and even hints of necrophilia). Director Acosta (who appears in this movie in an unbilled cameo) had previously made *Venganza de los punks* (1987—with some of the same cast), which was widely condemned as "pornographic" (although not hard-core). If there are any positive things one can say about *El violador infernal*, it would be (a) the rape scenes are not titillating at all, but are sleazy, brutal, and unpleasant; and (b) the special effects (optical and mechanical) are inept but at least the producers went to the trouble and expense of creating them, rather than cheating.

The film starts off with a big cheat, however: criminal Carlos "El Gato" is

executed in the electric chair. This would suggest that the movie is not set in Mexico, which DOESN'T HAVE THE DEATH PENALTY! However, nowhere during the rest of the movie is there any hint that the movie



isn't taking place in Mexico City, where it was shot. For some reason, after Carlos is killed, everyone exits from the execution chamber, leaving his corpse sitting in the chair. The "Supreme Being of Darkness" (SBOD from now on, with two female associates, who aren't seen after this) appears and says she will bring Carlos back to life to serve her. He has to renounce his religion, and spend his time raping and murdering people: each human sacrifice must be marked with a "666."

Carlos agrees. His first victim is a young gay man, who gets a shot of drugs, and is then repeatedly stabbed and—as he dies—is raped by Carlos, who then carves "666" on the corpse's buttocks. Visiting a beauty salon,

Carlos has sex with a masseuse (who, after he leaves, engages in a bit of lesbian fooling-around with the shop owner). The SBOD appears and reminds Carlos of his duty of provide “blood and fornication.” Later that night, Carlos and the masseuse drive to the park in his Cadillac, use drugs, and make out in the back seat, until Carlos pulls his dagger. The woman flees but is eventually caught, raped, and stabbed to death. Two policemen stumble across the killer but their gunshots have no effect; one detective is burned to death by ray-beams from Carlos’s eyes, the other is levitated into the air and dropped on a spiked fence. Victim number 3 is a customer at the beauty salon who makes eyes at Carlos while he’s getting a haircut and manicure. They make a date, which once



again concludes with rape and murder. The woman’s body is dumped in a remote area with a note for the police: “A gift from the son of Satan.”

Victim 4 is abducted in broad daylight from a park, then taken to...? (a shabby little room, not Carlos’s house), brutally beaten, raped, and stabbed to death. Carlos carves “666” on her back (we didn’t see this on victims 2 and 3 but assume it occurred).

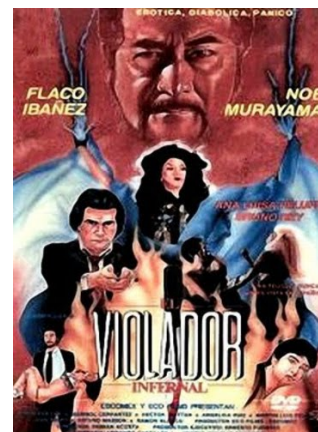
The final victim is Maribel, another employee of the beauty parlor. She and Carlos go to her apartment, where Carlos uses his supernatural powers to make things explode in a shower of sparks, lift her up in the air, toss her down a flight of stairs, and so on. Maribel is stabbed to death but Carlos, drunk, delays marking her with the triple-6, and the police (alerted by neighbors) arrive. For some reason, Carlos flees instead of confronting them or trying to carve the numerals (after all, he’d been impervious to bullets before). On the roof, the SBOD says Carlos blew it, and withdraws his diabolical protection. The police shoot Carlos and he falls off the rooftop. His corpse is placed in an ambulance, but he suddenly opens his eyes...The End.

The sequences with Carlos alternate with scenes of an irate police commander (Flaco Ibáñez, whose dialogue appears to have been post-dubbed) trying to solve the case. The detective quite rapidly figures out that the killer is supernatural and can only be stopped if he fails to mark a victim with “666,” and therefore the police can do nothing but wait until that happens! This doesn’t stop the commander from ranting and raving at his men, however.

The acting in *El violador infernal* isn’t horrible, but it’s pretty broad, to put it mildly. Ana Luisa Peluffo (who gets to wear a different exotic costume each time she appears) is OK, while Murayama is just adequate, neither projecting

extreme evil nor adding any nuances to his portrayal. Bruno Rey has a one-scene cameo, while the various victims need to do little more than scream. Ibáñez looks out of it and his role is poorly written and conceived.

[A trivia note: Juan Moro [aka Juan Rafael Moro Avila Camacho, the grandson of politician Maximino Avila Camacho and the great-nephew of former Mexican president Manuel Avila Camacho], an actor and police agent who also appeared in other Mexican movies around this time, later confessed to the politically-motivated murder of journalist Manuel Buendía in 1984 and was sentenced to 35 years (later reduced to 25 years) in prison. While incarcerated, Moro—reportedly a member of the “White Brigade” death squad of soldiers and police created to fight “urban guerrillas” in the late 1970s--formed a rock band and has since made a number of recordings (including some with the help of members of “Three Souls in My Mind,” the group seen in *Intrépidos punks!*).]



The production values of *El violador infernal* are low, but since the film was shot mostly on location, they aren’t too noticeable. The special effects include the



aforementioned ray-beams (used by Peluffo and Murayama—they don’t always start in the right place, so Murayama appears to have eyebrows capable of zapping

people) and some other mild opticals, while the mechanical effects are used primarily in the Maribel sequence (the wires holding Princesa Lea up are obvious in one part of the scene, but are more carefully concealed later; the actress or her stunt double also takes a couple of nice falls). Very little of this work is even marginally competent, but since many low-budget movies would have eschewed such effects entirely, a little credit for effort should be given.

Nonetheless, the film is really distasteful and crude in its concept and execution, being little more than a series of unpleasant rape & murder scenes.

reprinted from MFB 9/5



GHOSTS ON THE LOOSE



Los cuervos están de luto [The Ravens Are in Mourning] (Sagitario Films, 1965) *Exec Prod:* Rafael Lebrija; *Dir:* Francisco del Villar; *Adapt:* Julio Alejandro de Castro, Francisco del Villar, Hugo Argüelles; *Orig. Play:* Hugo Argüelles; *Orig Story:* Ramón Rubín (“El duelo”); *Photo:* Raúl Martínez Solares; *Prod Mgr:* Luis García de León; *Prod Chief:* José Alcalde; *Asst Dir:* Jesús Marín; *Film Ed:* Rafael Ceballos; *Art Dir:* Jorge Fernández; *Décor:* Pablo Galván; *Camera Op:* Cirilo Rodríguez; *Lighting:* Donaciano de Anda; *Makeup:* Concepción Zamora; *Re-rec:* Roberto Camacho; *Dialog Rec:* Jesús G. Gancy; *Recordist:* Ángel Trejo; *Union:* STPC; *Studio:* San Ángel Inn

Cast: Silvia Pinal (*Piedad*), Kitty de Hoyos (*ghost of don Lacho’s wife*), Narciso Busquets (*Mateo*), José Gálvez (*Gelasio*), José Luis Jiménez (*don Lacho*), Enrique Álvarez Félix (*Enrique*), Lilia Prado (*Mariana*), Hortensia Santoveña (*doña Tula*), Diana Ochoa (*doña Gude*), Carlos Riquelme (*don Acasio*), Miguel Suárez (*priest*), Fanny Schiller (*doña Enedina*), Ada Carrasco (*Acasio’s wife*), Dalia Iñíguez & Manuel Zozaya (*mourners*), **villagers:** Victorio Blanco, Armando Gutiérrez, Leonor Gómez, Regino Herrera

Notes: after making documentaries and shorts in the 1950s, Francisco del Villar started directing feature films in the 1960s, earning 13 credits before his death in 1978. 4 of these movies were generally tame entertainments, including 3 lightweight comedies (*Los ángeles de Puebla*, *El criado malcriado*, and *Almohada para tres*), while the other 8 are “serious” films with collaborators who are well-known in literary circles (Hugo Argüelles, Emilio Carballido, Richard Wright, and Vicente Leñero).

Los cuervos están de luto was del Villar’s second feature. Based on a 1960 play by Argüelles (inspired by Ramón Rubín’s short story), it’s a black comedy set in a

small Mexican village. The film’s stage origins are obvious—small cast, limited location—but del Villar “opens it up” a bit and tries to make even the house-bound scenes visually interesting. The sound design is curious, with particularly loud “farm” noises (chickens, cows, etc.) obvious in a few scenes, but absent for most of the picture (with good reason, since the majority of the scenes take place inside the house). There is no music score, although the village band plays for Lacho’s funeral at the conclusion.



Lacho, a bitter and stern farmer, lives with his grown sons Gelasio and Enrique, and Gelasio’s wife Piedad. His other son Mateo lives in another town with Mariana and their baby: they aren’t married because Lacho opposes the match. Lacho’s wife died years before; she periodically returns as a sexy ghost. Enrique wants to leave the farm and study in the capital, but is afraid to tell his father. When Lacho collapses while working in the fields, he’s not expected to live much longer. The town priest tells Gelasio, Enrique and Piedad that Lacho wrote a letter to be opened after his death: he is aware that one of this three sons was actually fathered by someone else in an act of revenge by his wife.

Piedad takes charge of the preparations for her father-in-law’s funeral (although he’s not dead yet). She orders a



grave to be dug and a coffin prepared. [In a funny and understated scene, Lacho wakes up to see the undertaker measuring him for the coffin! When it’s completed, the coffin is

propped up in Lacho’s room right in front of him.] She sends a telegram to Mateo, and prepares a *caldo* (stew) for the mourners who’ll attend the wake. However, Lacho refuses to die. This disrupts everything: they can’t plant their crops, nor can they take possession of Lacho’s fortune. Various townspeople arrive and think they’ve



been deceived because Lacho isn't dead yet; however, they do stay for the *caldo*, and it turns into a sort of party (Lacho, bedridden, can hear them laughing and talking).

The ghost of Lacho's wife appears periodically and torments him. [She also smacks Mariana's head from behind when the woman makes a catty remark about her portrait on the wall. Only Lacho can see and hear her, but Mariana definitely feels the blow.]

Everyone leaves. Enrique discovers his father has now passed away. Gelasio goes to retrieve the mourners but no one wants to come out again in the night. Piedad spots Lacho's ears wiggling but doesn't say anything to the others. The priest comes back and gives them the envelope indicating which son is illegitimate. After some discussion, Enrique tosses it into the fire, and everyone assumes he's not Lacho's natural son. While the priest is praying, Piedad sees Lacho's face twitching and covers it up. After the priest departs, the heirs open Lacho's strongbox but find very little money. They can't locate the deeds to his house and land until Piedad searches Lacho's clothing and discovers he's been hiding them. Enrique takes the cash and sets off for his new life in the capital. Gelasio and Piedad will keep the house and farm, and Mateo and Mariana (who can now marry) will own the property where they've been living.



Don Lacho is buried. Most of the mourners depart when a storm blows up. After they all leave, the ghost gloats but is suddenly pulled down into Lacho's grave, forced to spend eternity with the man she despises.

It appears the character of the ghost was not in the original play; one suspects it was added in part for marketing purposes, since the image of sexy Kitty de Hoyos was prominent on the posters and advertisements. She plays no particular part in the drama and is absent from the screen for long stretches of time.

Los cuervos están de luto is stagy but mildly interesting and entertaining. The performances are all good, but everyone plays more or less to their established characters: the only mild surprise is Silvia Pinal, wearing a black wig, who is fine as the venal Piedad, determined to secure a fair share of the inheritance for her husband. Del Villar's direction, as noted above, is competent, and the other technical aspects are satisfactory.



Autopsia de un Fantasma [Autopsy on a

Ghost] (Películas Rodríguez, 1966) *Exec. Producer:* Luis Quintanilla Rico; *Producer/Director/Screenplay:* Ismael Rodríguez; *Dialogue:* Pedro de Urdimalas; *Story:* Mario Hernández, Carlos Piñar; *Film Ed:* Fernando Martínez; *Asst. Dir:* Mario Llorca; *Art Dir:* Roberto Silva; *Photography:* Carlos Carbajal; *Makeup:* Margarita Ortega; *Prod. Chief:* José Alcalde; *Music:* Raúl Lavista; *Sound Ed:* Raúl Portillo; *Union:* STPC

Cast: Basil Rathbone (*Canuto Pérez*), John Carradine (*Satan*), Amadee Chabot (*Galena Pulido*), Cameron Mitchell (*Prof. Moléculo Pulido*), Carlos Piñar (*Jaime Blondo*), Vitola (*Vitola*), Chabelo (*Chabelo*), Arturo "Bigotón" Castro (*judge*) Susana Cabrera (*Susana*), Pancho Córdoba (*Pinedo*), Delia Magaña (*beggar*), Pompín Iglesias (*Pompín*), [Mario García] Harapos (*Agent 0*), Nacho Contla (*Nacho*), Ahuixotl [later Ahui Camacho] (*Electrón*), Manolín (*Manolín*), Jorge Delong (*Robotina*), [Estanislao] Schillinsky (*cabdriver*), Hnas. Tejada (*voice of Canuto's skeleton*), Manuel Trejo Morales

Notes: *Autopsia de un fantasma* is a bizarre concoction of ancient jokes, puns, and sight gags, delivered by an all-star (in a manner of speaking) cast of comedians. The picture reunites former comedy teams Manolín y Schillinsky (although Schillinsky has only a bit part) and Pompín and Nacho (who were big on TV-- Susana Cabrera had also worked with them). Chabelo's former partner Ramiro Gamboa doesn't show up, though.

Ismael Rodríguez had a long and relatively distinguished career in Mexican cinema, but an extremely uneven one. He gained fame in the 1940s-50s directing some of Pedro Infante's most famous films (including the actor's last, *Tizoc*), and in the early 1960s made some prestigious or at least well-intentioned movies (*Los hermanos del Hierro*, *Ánimas Trujano* with Toshiro Mifune, *El niño y el muro*) but veered off in strange

directions after that. *Autopsia de un fantasma*, *La puerta y la mujer del carnicero* (2 episodes of a planned TV anthology), *El ogro* and *Trampa para una niña* (both shot in Guatemala and starring Tin Tan and Rodríguez's own children), *Somos del otro Laredo*, etc., are curiosity pieces.

Autopsia is really only notable for the presence of Hollywood actors Cameron Mitchell, Basil Rathbone, and John Carradine (Amadee Chabot was also from the U.S. but her Hollywood film career had been very minor). How and why Ismael Rodríguez hired these three performers is unknown: was he thinking of releasing an



English-language version? Well, he apparently was, since all of the printed signs in the film are in Spanish and in English (often on the flip side), except for one which is verbally translated into English (by a figure in a black hood who speaks with a woman's voice and has a kind of Brooklyn accent!). It's difficult to imagine the film appealing to an English-speaking audience, though.

Mitchell is OK, cast completely against type as a befuddled mad scientist; Carradine (who would appear in five more Mexican features during his career) and Rathbone (looking suitably decadent and decrepit) are both satisfactory. Rathbone (and his alter ego skeleton) are both given Spanish accents (in keeping with their alleged age, since 400 years earlier everybody in Mexico spoke Spanish with a Spanish accent! Except the native inhabitants, of course). Carradine has a stentorian voice dubbing his dialogue (possibly Víctor Alcocer), which fits him well. Amadee Chabot wears nothing but a variety of bikinis during the film, occasionally flinging on a mink coat when she goes outside.

There is some discussion as to whether this was Basil Rathbone's "final" film appearance. *Autopsia de un fantasma* began shooting in October 1966, and Rathbone died in July 1967 (before the film was released). The other film that vies for this honour is *Hillbillies in a Haunted House*, which was released in May 1967, so if it was shot after *Autopsia de un fantasma* it must have had a fairly short turnaround from production to release.

Outside a deserted old house, an old beggar woman says it looks like it's going to "rain buckets," and it does--real ones. Meanwhile, in a hidden room inside the spooky mansion, the spirit of Canuto Pérez and his lively skeleton have been waiting 400 years for their case to be judged by the Almighty. Satan arrives to hear the sentence, anxious to know if Hell is going to have a new inhabitant.

"Canuto Pérez," the voice of God entones, "you spent your whole life deceiving innocent young women, so much so that you couldn't ever enjoy the love of the only woman you really loved. And then, at the end, you cheated destiny by taking your own life."

"I might respectfully mention," Canuto says, "that at the last minute I repented." God agrees, and because there is a



tiny spark of decency in Canuto's soul, his spirit will have one chance to get into Heaven. He will have four days to earn the love of one of 4

women who will cross his path: but this woman must love him so much that she is willing to give her life for him.

However, there is a catch: Canuto's spirit can't leave the house. The Devil is in charge of bringing four women to him. "Where will you find those 4 beautiful damsels?" Canuto asks. The Devil laughs: "Beautiful damsels? We'll see about that--after all, it won't be easy to bring people to this place."

The first woman Satan approaches is the eccentric, gawky Vitola. He puts the thought in her mind that she must become a famous dancer and model. She wakes up her feckless nephew Pompín, ordering him to rob the bank where he works, in order to pay for a trip to Switzerland to launch her career. He refuses, but she says he won't get any breakfast until he agrees. Their neighbor, don Nacho, arrives in time to stop Vitola from strangling her recalcitrant nephew. However, Nacho agrees robbing the bank would be a good idea, as long as he (Nacho) gets some of the money. "But I'm honest," Pompín protests. "Oh yes?" Nacho says, "What about those 10 pesos you



took from me? You are already dishonored." Pompín tries to pay the money back, but it's "too late." Nacho's overgrown son Chabelo comes in and

he too thinks the robbery is a good idea. Pompín is finally convinced, when they tell him he can go on a trip to the Mediterranean with his share: "My golden dream--the sea, girls in bikinis, girls in mono-kinis! I'll do it!"

Satan's next stop is the home of Moléculo Pulido, an eccentric inventor. The devil is baffled by the peculiar doorbell, which requires the insertion of 20 cents before it will ring. Inside are the Professor, his lovely daughter Galena, Susana the maid, and Galena's son Electrón, dressed up for the moment like an angel.

While Satan is waiting outside, two effeminate men pass by and make a comment about the (sulfur and brimstone) smell emanating from the devilish character. He turns them into goats: "that will give you something to smell!"

The devil gets in, unseen, and plants a naughty suggestion in Electrón's mind: the young boy stabs Susana in the rear with a hypodermic needle, and he is saved from a beating by the arrival of Robotina, Electrón's robot grandmother.

Susana tries to exorcise the house of its evil influences. Moléculo and Galena wish they could get rid of Robotina, because "she's a rebel without a cause." Galena checks

Susana to see if the maid has been injured by the robot's attack: "Either you're dead, or my watch has stopped." Susana tells the professor that he has his shoes on wrong.



"Impossible, the pointed parts are pointing forward." No, she says, you have them on the wrong feet. "These are the only feet I have," he replies. Susana helps him switch his shoes, and the grateful scientist asks "How much do I pay you?" "Nothing," Susana replies. "Well, beginning tomorrow you earn double."

Satan impersonates their landlord and demands the rent. They don't have it--Moléculo needs some parts for his new invention, and asks the devil for a loan. He shows some of his earlier works: a cigarette that doesn't smell or taste like tobacco, but causes "more and better" cancer. Satan is accidentally trapped in a reducing machine (a spinning chair); as he spins, sulfur flies out, splattering the others. He is saved from the full 32-minute treatment by Susana's quick action, which propels him into the wall of the house.

"Get out of this house in six hours!" he says. But "I don't want you to think I'm cruel," he adds (as he slaps Moléculo's face). They can live in another house, rent-free. Before he leaves, Satan remarks that Electrón is showing real promise (as a devilish child), but when the devil tries to turn Robotina into a goat, his powers fail him. He tries extending his tail (Moléculo: "We're all descended from apes"), and showing his horns (Moléculo: "Don't talk about

the man's wife"--"horns" are the sign for a cuckold), but Robotina tosses him through the door.

Before they leave, Moléculo, using Robotina as his secretary, writes a letter to their financial backer telling him of their new address, so the promised check can be forwarded.



Pompín is at work in the bank. Satan encourages him to steal the money: "Don't tempt me, Satan." The devil gives him a shove: "You can tempt me, but don't push!" Pompín fills his pockets, and heads for the haunted house to hide the stolen money.

Satan next accosts Manolín outside a funeral parlor, posing as a beautiful young woman. When Manolín turns the corner, the devil is now a postman, who delivers a letter addressed to Manolín's late father. It is from Moléculo. Manolín has a strange illness, his memory is failing and all he can remember are numbers.

Pompín arrives at the haunted house. Canuto and the skeleton think it might be one of the four women, but the devil tells them Pompín is merely the motive to attract the women there. Pompín hides the stolen money in a chamberpot and covers it with toilet tissue.

Moléculo's family arrives in a moving van. Canuto and his skeleton watch eagerly. "Which one will die for us?" Canuto wonders. "They're no good dead," the skeleton replies, "they have to be alive to take advantage of." The old beggar woman tries to pick Moléculo's pocket, but is foiled by one of his inventions, a disembodied hand.

Pompín, overcome by remorse, goes to the office of Jaime Blondo to surrender. Blondo, secret agent, is already on the case. The description he gives of Pompín is accurate: "Melon head...two eyes but only one nose...face of an imbecile. The most crucial clue is the mole on his nose." Pompín points out that this is merely a flyspeck on the photo, but Blondo angrily tells him to stop destroying evidence. Agent 0 brings in a group of battered criminals: "They all confessed voluntarily." Pompín finally convinces them he is the crook. Where's the money? "I shared it with the poor." "Lies! In this country there are no poor people."

Pompín is put on trial. Blondo is the judge (surrounded by beautiful women; the bailiff is a blonde

wearing a blue two-piece bathing suit!); the jury consists of disinterested hippies and beatniks (one is reading a comic book, another is playing with one of those cup-and-ball toys). Pinedo, Pompín's attorney, makes a rousing but nonsensical speech which garners wild applause. Blondo says we'll let Pompín go and follow him to the money. Nacho, Chabelo, and Vitola all have the same idea, although Vitola reneges on her deal to share the money with them. Pompín fails to pay Pinedo: "You got all the applause, I'll take the money," and the lawyer teams up with Nacho and Chabelo.

Back at the haunted house, Canuto's spirit enters Galena's bedroom, dressed as Cyrano de Bergerac. She spurns his advances and warns him that her father could disintegrate him: "you're a useless formula, a logarithm." Canuto has to report his first failure to his skeletal self.

Meanwhile, Blondo and Agent 0 are trailing Pompín, while Nacho, Chabelo and Pinedo (disguised as Christmas trees) are following Vitola.

Manolín arrives at the haunted house and Galena takes a liking to him. At first he can't recall why he's there, but then tells them he's the son of their (late) financial backer. They make him at home. "I'm going to show you my newest invention," Moléculo says. Manolín thinks he's referring to the lovely Galena. "No, I did that too, but this is something else."



Pompín dresses up like Little Red Riding Hood to elude Blondo and Agent 0.

Moléculo shows Manolín his new robot, Caruso. He needs money for the final parts--Manolín says "I have 4,000 pesos here, but I can't remember what for." Moléculo takes 3,500 for the Electrónica parts. "Wait," Manolín says, "I remember what the money is for. It's to bury my father. If I don't pay, the funeral home will make me take him back, and what will I do with him?" Moléculo refuses to return the cash, but says Caruso will be complete the next day, and then they'll all be rich. Manolín meets Electrón, Galena's young son. She doesn't know who the father is: "It all happened so quickly." She is a dedicated doctor whose work absorbs her. Manolín:

"Perhaps the father was a patient?" "Or impatient," Moléculo says.

Vitola can't get inside the haunted house. Under duress, she agrees to share the money with Nacho, Chabelo and Pinedo, and tells them the loot is in a rooftop water tank. However, when they climb up, she turns them over to the police. She then manages to get into the house (with Satan's aid) and Canuto sees her. "That damsel is for you," he tells his skeleton. When asked what she looked like, the spirit replies "an exotic beauty." Vitola gets a job as a servant for no wages (and she also has to pay for her meals).

Pompín, still dressed as Little Red Riding Hood, ducks into an all-girl's club and tricks Blondo and Agent 0 into following. They are attacked by the outraged women.

Down at the jail, the old beggar woman tries to pay her bond with a check. They won't take it: "this is an outrage!" "No, it's a jail." Nacho, Chabelo and Pinedo ask: "What about us?" "Cancel all your appointments for the next 6 months," the judge says. However, he will have to release them if Vitola doesn't show up to press charges by the next day. Pompín, Blondo and Agent 0 are brought in, charged with being degenerates. Blondo pays their fine, but Pompín doesn't want to go. In order to stay in jail, he cuts off the judge's moustache. "Lock him up until my beautiful moustache grows back!"

Moléculo is programming his new robot, Caruso. However, when he leaves, Robotina tampers with her rival. Meanwhile, Susana catches Vitola searching the house for the money. "Help me look and I'll give you the biggest half," Vitola says. Susana agrees.



Canuto appears as a beatnik (or perhaps an imitation Beatle, since he has a guitar and a Beatle-style wig) and tries to make love to Vitola. When she finds out he's a ghost, she turns him down: "I want something more to hold onto than pure air." Failure #2.

It is time for the big moment: Moléculo turns on Caruso, and asks him to sing for the assembled audience. Please, anything, he pleads, "Whatever you want--Singing in the Rain." Instead, the robot blows raspberries. So much for their plan to get rich. Why not rent out rooms, Manolín suggests. When they do, the beggar woman, Nacho,

Chabelo and Pinedo snatch them up, at the bargain price of \$100 a day, all included. Blondo and Agent 0 are turned away. Canuto is shocked to see the new arrivals, especially the only female, "an old woman!" The devil laughs.

The new guests are welcomed by Galena. "Everything in this house is at your disposal, including my services." However, Manolín is jealous at the males' leering looks:

"Galena is a doctor and she does the examining, she is not to be examined." Vitola also doesn't like to see her rivals there, but tells



Susana that "We'll let them find the money for us, and then. . ." (she brandishes a large knife).

While Moléculo is working on Caruso, Galena is trying to find out why Manolín is absent-minded. "Your mind is like a scrambled egg." Actually, she says, your mind is like a camera: "Everything you see, hear, touch is imprinted on your brain like a photograph." "Can I take a photo of your lips?" Manolín asks. "Well, all right--but don't overexpose." However, Manolín kisses Moléculo by mistake.

Canuto appears as an Apache dancer and tries to make Susana fall in love with him, but she also turns him down. Satan laughs at him: "There aren't any good jokes in Hell, they're out of style. But here I can have fun." Electrón and Robotina see Canuto, but when the robot grandmother tries to grab the ghost, he disappears.

At dinner (with food pills served on an electric train), the devil tries to sow dissent between Nacho and Chabelo. "Watch the poisonous way he looks at you."

Canuto's skeleton finally breaks out of the crypt and spots Vitola ("What a beautiful skeleton!"), searching the basement. She nearly finds the money, but is interrupted by Electrón and Robotina. She hands them the chamberpot and leaves. Robotina puts the money inside her chest. The skeleton follows Vitola to her room and they fall in love. When the skeleton returns to the crypt, he says "We're saved, we're going to heaven!" But Satan intervenes: a woman has to fall in love with Canuto Perez, not "his marimba." Canuto is crestfallen: "Things are going worse than in Vietnam." He warns the skeleton to stay in the basement so as not to ruin his chances with female #4, the beggar woman.

All of the conspirators are disguised as ghosts so they can search the house at their leisure. Canuto sees the beggar making her costume and leaves in disgust. The "ghosts" tear the house apart looking for the hidden loot. Robotina tosses Susana, Vitola, Chabelo, and Nacho out of

Electrón's room, but is baffled by Canuto, the real ghost. "Who are you?" "A tortured soul, condemned to eternal damnation. A being no one loves," Canuto replies. "Do you know what love is?" "I know what hate is," Robotina says. "Everyone hates me except my boy [Electrón]." "Well, imagine how you will feel when he leaves you," Canuto says sadly.

The next morning, Moléculo and his family are appalled at the ruins of the house. "Which of you installed the air conditioning and the interior decoration?" he asks his guests. They all say: "The ghost did it!" and Moléculo determines to destroy the spirit. He has a device that will track down the skeleton, and once that is destroyed, the ghost will also be gone.



Pompín arrives, disguised as a nun. When the others hear this, they rush to find him and the money. Pompín can't find the chamberpot where he hid the money. He is trapped by the others: they tie him up, attach two tubes to his nose, and threaten to irritate a skunk (on the other end of the tubes), unless he reveals the hiding place of the money. Desperate, he says Pinedo, his lawyer, has it. They put Pinedo in a box and fill it with live cats. Pinedo accuses Vitola--she is doubled up in a box and has her feet tickled. She blames Susana!

Moléculo and Manolín begin to hunt the ghost. Robotina warns Canuto to escape, but he can't leave the house. His skeleton is caught in a kind of giant vacuum cleaner and taken to the pulverizing chamber.

Meanwhile, Susana is tied up under a suspended piano, and the rope is being burned with a blowtorch. She claims the beggar woman has the stolen loot. Nacho and Chabelo, the only remaining conspirators, force her to drink castor oil until she finally says Nacho has it. Chabelo ties up his own father and tortures him: "Who has it?" "You do, my son." Chabelo is outraged: "Who can I blame then? You rats! We're all guilty, and we're all going to die!" He splashes gasoline over them and asks his father for a light. Nacho sets him on fire with the blowtorch.

Canuto reluctantly tries to sweet-talk the beggar woman, still tied up. "You remind me of my grandmother --but, I loved my grandmother!" he adds hastily. However, he can't do it.

The skeleton is slowly being reduced to dust, which will spell the end of Canuto as well, so Robotina sacrifices



herself to destroy the device.

Galena and Moléculo tell Electrón they'll make him a new robot, but he is sad. Although Canuto was saved by

Robotina's love, he says he won't go to heaven, he'll stay with her robotic remains for eternity. Galena promises Manolín he'll regain his memory. Blondo and the police arrive to arrest the crooks. They'll be sent to the Islas Marias, Mexico's penal colony islands (Pompín is happy: "My watery dream comes true."). Pinedo, the lawyer, says "I hate cats!" as he runs around and barks like a dog. The beggar woman suggests Moléculo make an army of robots --she'll teach them to beg, they'll all get rich. Moléculo finally repairs Caruso, and the robot advances on him inexorably. "Don't kill me!" the scientist pleads. "No, I love you, give me a kiss!" the robot simpers.

Autopsia de un fantasma is a very bizarre film, even surreal at times. The above (over-detailed) synopsis may actually make the film seem more entertaining than it really is, but it's not necessarily a bad picture. It's just...weird.

[A slightly different version of this review was previously available on my "Films of Amadee Chabot" website.]



Más allá del exorcismo* [Beyond Exorcism] (Metheus Film-Emaus Film-Oro Films [Prods. Gonzalo Elvira], 1974) *Prod:* Benito Perojo, Gonzalo Elvira; *Dir:* Mario Siciliano; *Scr:* Federico de Urrutia, Julio

Busch, Mario Siciliano; *Story:* Federico de Urrutia, Julio Busch; *Additional Dialogue:* Ted Rusoff [English-dubbed version]; *Photo:* Vincente Minaya; *Music:* Stelvio Cipriani; *Film Ed:* Otello Colangeli; *Set Des:* José Antonio de la Guerra; *Spec FX:* Paolo Ricci; *Prod Mgr:* Piero Ghione, Rafael Vázquez; *Asst Dir:* Paulino Gonzáles, Ivo Barouch; *Prod Supv:* Carlo Zanotti; *Makeup:* Marisa Marconi, Carlo Nin; *Sound Tech:* Fiorenzo Magli

Italian-Spanish-Mexican co-production shot in Rome

* aka *Eroticofollia*, *Malocchio*, and *Evil Eye* (©1987, Hill-Top Films). Mexican posters/lobbies for this movie have *Mal*Occhio* [the * is actually a design of an eye] in great big letters, and *Más allá del exorcismo* in smaller letters, but the onscreen title is the latter.]

Cast: Jorge Rivero (*Peter Crane*), Richard Conte (*Dr. Stone*), Pilar Velázquez ******(*Dr. Sara Turner*), Anthony Steffen (*Lt. Ranieri*), Daniela Giordano (*Tania****), Eduardo Fayardo [sic] (*Walter****), Pia Giancaro (*Elizabeth Stevens*), Luis La Torre (*Robbie*), Eva Vanicek (*Sonja*), Alan Collins [aka Luciano Pigozzi] (*William* [Derek in some sources] *Stevens*), Lane [sic] Fleming (*Marta*), Floria Marrone, Terele [Pávez] (*Walter's wife*)

******some sources credit Velázquez as playing "Yvonne Chevrel" and Eva Vanicek as "Dra. Turner," but Velázquez is definitely "Dr. Sara Turner." Lone Fleming is sometimes credited as "Yvonne," Vanicek as "Sonja," Pia Giancaro as "Elizabeth" and Daniela Giordano as "Tanya," or vice-versa.

*******these characters are credited as "Taga" and "Basev" in some print sources.

Notes: this is a mildly entertaining horror movie harmed by a confused and pointless conclusion. The basic concept is good, however.

One online review claims "extraterrestrials" are behind everything, and that they take Jorge Rivero's character away at the end! I wonder if they were watching the same movie I was? The Spanish-language version runs about 93 minutes including a minute or so of black screen at the end while music plays. I have copies of the Italian version (*Eroticofollia*, dubbed into German & subbed in Spanish!) and the English-dubbed version (*Evil Eye*) in addition to the Spanish-language version (*Más allá del exorcismo*). The conclusions are basically the same (described below), except that *Más allá del exorcismo* re-uses a closeup shot of Jorge Rivero on the telephone from early in the movie, whereas the Italian & English versions have a longer, medium longshot from this same early sequence (and Yvonne's dialogue is slightly longer). *Más allá del exorcismo* also removes the shots of full frontal nudity from the opening sequence. This version also bills Jorge Rivero first, spells Pilar Velázquez properly (instead of Velásquez), and omits the end credits. Curiously the original credits in all 3 versions are in English!

The "Mexican" coproduction credit may be

somewhat spurious. While many sources list Gonzalo Elvira, he's not credited on-screen, suggesting perhaps he was only involved in acquiring the film for Mexican release by his Oro Films company.

Playboy Peter Crane, after a wild party at his luxurious home, receives a telephone call from Yvonne Chevrel, who claims she knows him. She comes to his house and as they start making out on his sofa (look, I said he was a playboy, right?), he is seized with a strange urge and strangles her to death. [Afterwards, the throats of the people Peter kills look like they've

been ripped open somehow.] He disposes of her body but the next day doesn't remember what occurred (or thinks it was a dream). Peter visits a clinic run by Dr. Stone, a friend of his father's from America. No physical reason can be ascertained for his hallucinatory dreams (of naked, odd-looking people who howl at him) and his belief they are "ordering" him to "do things." Peter meets Dr. Sara Turner, one of Stone's attractive colleagues. Later, on a

drive in the country, Peter's car breaks down. He walks to a nearby home, and is admitted by an old woman, who then vanishes. The house is occupied by William and Elizabeth, acquaintances of the psycho playboy. While William is tinkering with the car, Elizabeth tries to seduce Peter, indicating they had made love before (at a party or something).

Peter sees a portrait of the old lady and is informed it was a relative who died recently. Peter strangles Elizabeth and kills William as well. The old lady who had admitted Peter to the house looks in through the window and smiles. A short time later, police Lt. Ranieri (who coincidentally also investigated Yvonne's murder after her body was found in a lake or something) learns the corpse of the old lady was found buried in the woods near the house where Elizabeth and William were killed. Peter goes to the clinic and asks to be locked up so he can't kill anyone. Nonetheless, he escapes after a manifestation of psychic powers nearly wrecks the hospital (but, when Lt. Ranieri arrives later at Stone's behest, everything looks normal and no one mentions the supernatural gusts of wind, etc.).

Peter visits his rich Eurotrash pal Robbie, who is having (yet another) wild party. Peter says he knows Robbie killed his own father the month before, in order to inherit the family fortune: "he told me so himself."

Robbie is murdered, his throat ripped out. So-- it appears that Peter is being compelled by the spirits of the dead to avenge their deaths by killing their murderers (Yvonne allegedly killed her husband, and William and Elizabeth presumably murdered the old lady). Walter, Peter's major-domo, says he witnessed Yvonne's murder and wants money from his employer. While waiting for Peter to return, Walter and his wife argue, and Walter whacks her with a bottle. He then calls the police and blames this on Peter, too. But when Lt. Ranieri arrives, Walter is choking on a live frog (!) and is shot to death by a rifle that levitates off a shelf and fires itself!

Meanwhile, Peter and Sara have moved to her country house to try to "cure" him. Peter dreams of the naked, dead people crawling towards him and screaming "Kill her!" [I don't think Sara murdered anyone, but you never know.] Peter is trapped in an upstairs room while the rest of the house undergoes the usual psychic tremors-- floorboards rupturing, random objects flying around, etc.-- and Sara screams.

Ranieri is on the way, but his car mysteriously breaks down...CUT to Sara and Peter driving on a mountain road, then their car goes off a cliff. CUT to Peter waking up from the wild party that opened the film, the telephone rings, it's Yvonne Chevrel who says she needs to talk to him...

What th--? In the first place, how did Sara and Peter get out of the house? In the second place, why did the dead people make their car go off a cliff? In the third place, the cyclical "all a dream, or was it?" end is really shopworn.



Más allá del exorcismo also includes some irrelevant (or just plain confusing) scenes and sequences that muddy the waters even further. For example, the opening sequence not only includes the (as we learn later) dead people, there is also a hooded-and-cloaked figure who stands inside a painted magic symbol and casts a spell (or something) on a photo of Peter. Since the German DVD release is entitled (in translation) "The Secret of the Magic Circle," perhaps this had a greater significance in some versions.

Also, Lt. Ranieri has his own little subplot--sometimes he loses his hearing, his wife is an artist who gives him a magic key ring or something to protect him from evil (it apparently saves him from being crushed by a load of bricks late in the film), and so forth, but this is only tangentially tied in to the Peter Crane narrative.

The production values are adequate but the special effects are spotty. The final scene in Sara's home is adequately done, but when some cigarette butts in an ashtray "move" (a sign Peter's psychic powers are kicking in) and when a hospital gurney spins around wildly, the mechanical devices that are causing these effects are painfully obvious. There are no real optical effects that I can recall (so if there were, they weren't that memorable!). The dubbing is not especially good; clearly, in many scenes the actors were speaking English (and possibly Italian). As a consequence, it's hard to judge the acting fairly, but Richard Conte turns in a stiff, lifeless performance. The other performers are adequate, although their "mod" '70s clothes and *dolce vita* attitude in their wild parties are risible today.

original review (in MFB 4/4, November 1997)

revised for this issue



Las que las dan...me dan miedo (El miedo me da risa) [Those Who Give...Scare Me (Fear Makes Me Laugh)] (Grupo Videoarte--Prods. Laser--Zbenk Inc., 1989) *Exec Prod:* Guillermo Jaime Alarid; *Dir/Scr:* Miguel Ángel Lira; *Photo:* Febronio Teposte [sic]; *Music:* Emilio Macedo; *Film Ed:* Rogelio Hernández L; *Camera Op:* Amado Portillo O.; *Makeup:* Luz María Larraguivel; *Sound:* Enrique López Rendón

Cast: Alejandro Suárez (*Agapito "El Simpatías"*, *El Super Simpa*), Antonio Raxel (*Filiberto*), Blanca Nieves (*María*), Ana Luz Aldana (*Candy*), Scarlet[t] Alvarado (*Susana*), Jenny Benezra (*Lupita*), Miguel A. Lira (*The Ghost; Uncle Pacheco*)

Notes: *Las que las dan...me dan miedo* is a good example of why *videohomes* (direct-to-video productions) have a bad reputation. It's very cheap, has ugly photography, was shot in somebody's house, features a

muddled and uninteresting script, and presents us with wildly variable performances from a tiny cast.

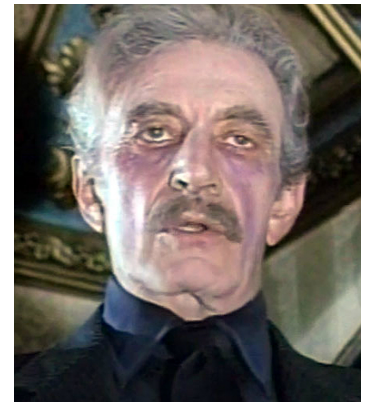
Alejandro Suárez, half-brother of well-known comic actor Héctor Suárez, began his career in the 1960s. He has



appeared in some films, but made his mark primarily on television sketch comedy shows like "Ensalada de locos" and "La Carabina de Ambrosio." A sampling of

these programs gives on the impression that Suárez's various characters--El Vulgarcito, El Simpatías, El Primerizo, etc.--were specifically designed to be as annoying as possible. In *Las que las dan...* he plays two of his TV roles, the obnoxious El Simpatías (who sniggers at his own jokes), and superhero El Super Simpa (who has no particular personality at all). El Simpatías wears garish disco-era clothes, including a huge, multi-coloured, floppy cap which resembles those worn by the "Wild and Crazy Guys" (aka the Festrunk brothers) Steve Martin and Dan Ackroyd on "Saturday Night Live."

The film also features actress-dancer Blanca Nieves, who had a fairly robust film career in the latter half of the 1980s, and veteran Antonio Raxel. Along for the ride are Scarlett Alvarado, Ana Luz Aldana, and Jenny Benezra.



[To my surprise, Blanca Nieves has a topless scene late in the film, as a ghost removes her bra. Otherwise, there is no nudity, although all 4 of the actresses spend the majority of their screen time in skimpy outfits including miniskirts and baby-doll nighties.]

Director Miguel Ángel Lira, nicknamed "Medelito," had a substantial acting career and (rather surprisingly) directed some theatrical features in addition to *videohomes*. He's operating here with a miniscule budget and a horrible script (the latter being his fault) and while *Las que las dan...* is by no means "well-directed," Lira tries a few varied camera angles to provide some relief to the monotonous master shots that comprise the bulk of the running time.

Candy hires detective El Simpatías to accompany her and her friend Susana to her late uncle's mansion, which she (perhaps) has inherited. They're greeted by lugubrious major-domo Filiberto. [At the conclusion of the film, Filiberto is revealed to be an actor hired for a scheme, yet Candy claims she "remembers" him when she first arrives at the house.] Also on hand are Candy's cousin María and her friend Lupita, also intent on receiving the inheritance.

Nothing much happens for a while. Everyone gets drunk and goes to bed. [Later, we see Filiberto apparently sleeps in an upright coffin and has a plush Felix the Cat doll.] El Simpatías is confronted by a gun-toting ghost. [María later poses as a ghost and shoots some people with a very very small handgun, but it's unclear if this appearance is supposed to be her or the real ghost in the house.] María vanishes; El Simpatías becomes El Super Simpa and finds María's corpse in the garden. The body later vanishes. Lupita then disappears and is found dead, dressed as a clown, stuffed in a trash can!



María, not dead after all but posing as a ghost, shoots El Simpatías, Candy, Lupita (who isn't dead, either), and Susana. They later return as vengeful spirits and haunt her. María and Filiberto were in cahoots to eliminate her rivals for the estate; they "poison" each other, but it's only a laxative. Finally, the plot is "explained" (in the loosest sense of the word): Candy's Uncle Pacheco didn't die after all, he set up the whole plot to see which of his heirs deserved his fortune. María was shooting blanks, no one is dead. Everyone leaves, except the real ghost, who stays in the house.

Las que las dan... is not very entertaining at all. There's little true humour, the editing is confusing and choppy, and none of the characters or performers stands out in a good way.

Not recommended.



Obituaries

Santiago Galindo

Producer Santiago Galindo died on 11 July 2018 in Mexico City; he is presumed to have taken his own life. Galindo was born in Mexico City in January 1959. A member of the extended Galindo film family, Santiago Galindo Pérez began producing theatrical



films like *Vacaciones de terror* and *Trampa infernal* in the 1980s, as well as 3 films with pop star Gloria Trevi, including *Zapatos viejos*, which he also co-directed. He also wrote the screen stories or scripts for several films. In the late 1990s and beyond he began producing for television, including popular series such as "Bailando por un sueño."



Burt Reynolds

Actor Burt Reynolds died of a heart attack on 6 September 2018; he was 82 years old. Burton Leon Reynolds was born in February 1926 in Lansing, Michigan, but grew up in Florida and attended Florida State University as a football player. When injuries ended his athletic career, Reynolds dropped out and decided to try his luck as an actor. He worked in television in the



1950s and 1960s-- starring in several series-- and made his movie debut in the early 1960s. Some of Reynolds' early starring roles were in films shot overseas, including *Navajo Joe* and *100*

Rifles (both made in Spain) and *Impasse* (the Phillipines), as well as his only Mexican-made movie, *Shark*. The actor became famous in the 1970s and beyond in pictures such as *Deliverance*, *The Longest Yard*, *Smokey and the Bandit*, *Semi-Tough*, and *Boogie Nights*, and also worked steadily on television.

Un arma de dos filos, aka *Shark!*, *Man-Eater*, *Caine*, *Nido de tiburones*, etc., was a U.S.-Mexican coproduction that began shooting in Mexico in April 1967. The director was Samuel Fuller and Reynolds was joined by Hollywood actors Barry Sullivan and Arthur Kennedy, while Mexico was represented by Silvia Pinal and Enrique Lucero, among others. Despite its shooting location (which included Manzanillo), the story was set in North Africa.

Burt Reynolds was married to actresses Judy Carne and Loni Anderson, and also had extended romantic relationships with Dinah Shore and Sally Field.



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