

# THE MEXICAN FILM BULLETIN

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#### OBITUARIES

##### **COLUMBIA DOMÍNGUEZ**

Golden Age actress Columbia Domínguez died of a heart attack in Mexico City on 13 August 2014; she was 85 years old. Columba Domínguez Adalid was born in March 1929 in the state of Sonora, but moved to the capital with her family while a young girl. “Discovered” by director



Emilio Fernández, Domínguez appeared as an extra and in minor roles in a number of films until receiving her first substantial parts in Fernández’s *Río Escondido* (1947) and *Maclovía* (1948), winning the Ariel Award as Best Co-starring Actress for her performance

in the latter. Domínguez was elevated to the female lead in *Pueblerina* (1948) and became the new “muse” (and romantic partner in real life) of Emilio Fernández until their break-up in 1952. They had one daughter together, Jacaranda, who died tragically in 1979.

Mostly cast in “rural” roles by Fernández, Domínguez played a variety of “modern” parts in subsequent movies for other directors, pictures such as *Historia de un abrigo de mink* and *Ladrón de cadáveres*. However, her distinctive facial features meant she was still often cast as *indias* or *mestizas*. Domínguez began working in television in the 1960s, and continued to appear in that medium, as well as in occasional films, through the 1970s. She officially “retired” in the late ‘80s, but several years before her death resumed acting in both features and shorts.

Columba Domínguez received a special IMCINE award at the 1996 Arieles—“in tribute to her ability and special beauty”—and the lifetime achievement Ariel de Oro at the 2013 Ariel ceremony.



##### **MARÍA EUGENIA LLAMAS** **“LA TUCITA”**

Actress María Eugenia Llamas, nick-named “La Tucita,” died of heart failure on 31 August 2014; she was

70 years old. Llamas was born in Mexico City in 1944, the child of Spanish Civil War refugees. She shot to fame as the adorably precocious “La Tucita” opposite Pedro Infante in *Los tres Huastecos*, *Dicen que soy mujeriego* (both 1948), and *El seminarista* (1949). In 1950 she appeared in *Las dos huerfanitas* and its sequel, *Los hijos de la calle*—both with another, slightly-older child star famous for appearing with Pedro Infante, Evita Muñoz “Chachita.” Llamas



won the Best Child Performer Ariel for the second picture.

After working in a handful of other films during the Fifties, Llamas was off the screen for a number of years. She worked in a few action films in the 1980s and made *Más allá de mí* in 2008. Llamas also worked in broadcasting, was employed as the Cultural Director for IMSS, and began a new career while in her forties as a story-teller, a profession for which she received considerable acclaim.

María Eugenia Llamas married Rómulo Lozano in 1966, and the couple had three children. One of them, Fernando Lozano, is an actor and TV host. María Victoria “Marivi” Llamas, who appeared in a few 1940s films and later became an author and journalist, was La Tucita’s sister, and their half-brother José Ángel Llamas is also an actor.



##### **GUILLERMO LARREA**



Guillermo Larrea died on 7 August 2014, after suffering several heart attacks while on vacation in Los Cabos, Baja California Sur. Larrea began acting professionally in the late 1980s, and worked steadily in films, on the stage, and on television until his death. His movies include *Rito terminal* (for which he received a Best Actor Ariel nomination), *El Gavilán de la*

*sierra*, the remake of *El libro de piedra*, the English-language *For Greater Glory: The True Story of the Cristiada*, and his last, *La dictadura perfecta* (to be released this fall).

# Annual Halloween Issue Film Reviews!

## EL MONJE LOCO [THE MAD MONK]

"El Monje Loco" began "life" in 1937 as the host of a radio series on the powerful XEW station in Mexico.



Salvador Carrasco played the eponymous narrator, who introduced tales of mystery and horror with the words: "No one knows, no one knew...the truth about the horrible case of [whatever]!" then laughing maniacally as he played the pipe organ. The character was brought to Mexican comic books several years later, appearing in "Chamaco Chico," with stories by Carlos Riveroll del Prado (who wrote the radio scripts) and art by Juan Reyes Bolaños "Beiker."



It was in the comics that the physical appearance of the Monje Loco was codified—missing teeth, one bulging eye, monk's cowl, etc.

The mad monk appeared

in other comics in the 1950s ("Cuentos de abuelito") and in the late 1960s received his own title, published successively by Continente (1967), Tempora (1967-71), and Grupo Editor de México (1972). One last gasp (to date) came in 1984, when Editorial Andromeda issued a new "Monje Loco" comic.



The first film appearance of the character—played on-screen by Salvador Carrasco—came in 1940. Alejandro Galindo shot a series of 6 "episodes," four of which received theatrical release as shorts in December of that year: *La herencia negra* [The Black Inheritance], *El horrible caso de las manos cortadas* [The Horrible Case of the

Severed Hands], *La gárgola humana* [The Human Gargoyle], *El Cristo justiciero* [The Avenging Christ Figure]. It is unknown if the other two episodes—*El pacto con el demonio* [Pact with the Devil] and *La reincarnación de Vilma Bordoni* [The Reincarnation of Vilma

Bordoni]—were ever shown publicly. For many years these films were considered lost, but in 2013, the Filmoteca de la UNAM announced it was restoring several episodes which had been discovered.

Salvador Carrasco—credited with writing some "Monje Loco" stories in the comic books—died in 1972. *Leyendas macabras de la colonia* (1973) brought the Monje Loco character back to the cinema (with the credited permission of Carrasco's widow), featuring an unidentified actor in the role.



For some mysterious reason, the Monje appears in only one brief scene in the middle of the picture—playing a pipe organ and cackling madly, as usual—and does not introduce or narrate the movie otherwise.

*El Monje Loco* (1984) was a direct-to-video production which in many ways was faithful to the original concept, reproducing the title character's "origin story" and then utilising him as a narrator/Greek chorus in an unrelated fantasy tale. However, the overall quality of the production was poor and the film is tedious and crude.

But the Monje Loco has not been forgotten. In 1992, the musical group "Mister Chivo" recorded a song entitled "Mi amigo el Monje Loco," and in the late 1990s comedian Eugenio Derbez parodied the Monje Loco on his TV series "Derbez en Cuando." The "Lonje Moco," portrayed by Derbez in heavy makeup, tries to tell tales of terror but gets confused, forgets what he intended to say, and otherwise botches the job.



## El Monje Loco [The Mad Monk] (J.L.

Videograbaciones-Julio Aldama, 1984)  
*Exec Prod:* José Luis Yeo; *Dir:* Julio Aldama; *Scr:* Rafael Portillo, Roberto G. Rivera; *Prod Mgr:* Jorge Aguado Bazna

**Cast:** Julio Aldama (*José Martínez*), Julio Augurio (*Martín Liceaga*), Luz María Rico (*Carmen*), Queta Lavat (*doña Susana*), Paco Pharrez (*Padre Superior*), "Yeo el Mago" [José Luis





Yeo] (? *Monje Loco*), Raymundo Fuentes “Tilico,” Jorge Aldama (*Alejandro*), Francisco Águila Ávila, Alfonso Allison, Daniel Jiménez, María de la Sierra (*doña María*), Lucha y Jorge (*singers*)

**Notes:** a curiosity piece but not a satisfactory film in any way, *El Monje Loco* is a relatively obscure *videohome* which revived the famous radio and comic book title character. Split into two sections—with entirely different casts and stories and even separate “title cards,” almost as if this was intended as a TV pilot (but probably not, given the poor production values)—the plot(s) were apparently adaptations of stories from the “Monje Loco” comic books and/or radio programs.

The opening sequence is set in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Martín Liceaga is ready to take his final vows and become a



monk, but when he encounters the young and beautiful Carmen—a childhood acquaintance, now all grown up—he starts to question his religious vocation. Carmen likes Martín as a friend and a spiritual

advisor, but has no romantic interest in him. She’s also engaged to marry another man. Martín finally snaps and chases her lustfully to the top of the monastery, from which she falls to her death. Martín has visions of her ghost and decides to kill himself so he can join her in the afterlife. God [in voiceover] condemns Martín to wander the Earth for eternity, witnessing endless scenes of human suffering and sin, until he truly repents.

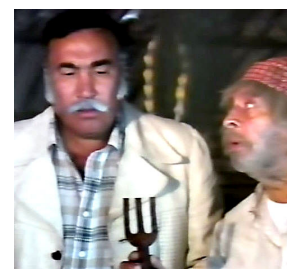
Martín apparently undergoes a Jekyll-and-Hyde transformation: he wanders off-screen in torment, then there’s a cut to the Monje Loco (ping-pong ball eye, mostly-toothless) laughing madly and playing the organ. [The Monje Loco is played by someone else, probably El Mago Yeo—the film’s producer-- but is presumably supposed to be the cursed Martín.]



The second part of *El Monje Loco* is entitled “El talismán maldito” (The Cursed Talisman). The Monje Loco arrives at the farm of José and his wife Susana, who are deeply in debt and in danger of losing their home. The Monje asks José for a carved image of Christ that the farmer inherited--it’s the same one that was on the wall of Martín’s room in the monastery, apparently--but José refuses to part with it. After his son Alejandro is injured working on his truck, José leaves the *Cristo* with the local druggist in exchange for some medicine. Later, José asks the local *brujo* for an amulet, which strongly resembles a

3-tined, wooden salad server. Each tine represents a wish, but every wish must be paid for with...dun dun DUN...a death. José wishes for money to pay the mortgage—

Alejandro is killed in an accident and “coincidentally” the insurance money is exactly the amount needed to save the farm. José’s wife is distraught at her son’s death, and José wishes him back again (oddly enough, there’s no mention of whose “death” pays for this wish). Alejandro comes back, but as a zombie whose face is half falling-off. José uses the salad fork’s third and final wish to get rid of his undead son, and then he (José) drops dead.



This second story is obviously a re-telling of “The Monkey’s Paw,” which had previously been adapted by Mexican cinema as *Espiritismo*. The Monje Loco appears



sporadically throughout the episode, playing his organ, commenting on the plot (and, as noted, taking an active if brief part in it himself), and laughing maniacally.

These scenes are actually not too bad (at least they’re diverting),

particularly compared to the “dramatic” plot.

As noted earlier, the production values are quite low and the direction, script, and so on are uninspiring. The sound is particularly bad at times, but at least the first story is scored largely with organ music, a traditional touch harking back to the character’s radio days (and his own predilection for playing that instrument). The second part alternates between *Mesa of Lost Women*-style guitar strumming and organ music.

Although only 76 minutes long and glacially paced, *El Monje Loco* still takes time out for a long duet between Martín and Carmen on “Ave María” (Luz María Rico makes almost no effort to lip-sync convincingly) and a romantic song by Martín alone, and a song by “Lucha y Jorge” in the second part!



Julio Aldama began his career as a leading man—usually in Westerns and *rancheras*, although he did play major roles in two of Luis Alcoriza’s early efforts, *Tiburoneros* and *Tlayucan*—then moved into character and “heavy” parts and also started directing. Julio Augurio is Aldama’s son (after his father’s death, he changed his professional name to “Julio Aldama Jr.”), as is Jorge Aldama. Their performances are adequate, as are most of the supporting performers, although Luz María Rico is stiff

and awkward as Carmen (which is odd, since she wasn't a novice actress, having been in various films before this).



## VARIOUS VAMPIRES

### El vampiro teporocho [The Wino Vampire]

(Galáctica Films, 1989) *Prod:* Luis Bekris G.; *Dir:* Rafael



*Villaseñor Kuri; Scr:* Antonio Orellana; *Story:* Rafael Villaseñor Kuri, Luis Bekris G., Antonio Orellana; *Photo:* Agustín Lara A.; *Music:* Carlos Torres; *Prod Mgr:* Blanca Rodarte; *Asst Dir:* Roberto Marroquín; *Film Ed:* Max Sánchez; *Art Dir:* Alberto Villaseñor Kuri; *Camera Op:* Fermín Hernández; *Special FX:* Durán y Durán; *Makeup:*

Carmen de la Torre; *Sound Engin:* Manuel Rincón V.; *Re-rec:* Ricardo Saldívar; *Sound Ed:* Enrique Contreras; *Union:* STIC

**Cast:** Pedro Weber "Chatanuga" (*Count Dracula*), Charly Valentino (*Mantecas*), Humberto Herrera (*Feliciano Villaseñor "Tripas"*), Gabriela Goldsmith (*Roxana*), Rebeca Silva (*Afrodita*), Guillermo de Alvarado "Condorito" (*Miliano Gallo "Zopilote"*), Laura Tovar (*bargirl*), Patricia Alvarado, Gabriela Rios, Bárbara Fox, Gina Leal, Mario Zebadua "Colocho" (*Lic. Marco Antonio Díaz "Topillos"*), Raúl Alberto, José Luis Caro (*scientist*), Rafael Fernández, Tito Guillén (*policeman*), Ernesto Casillas, Carlos Canto, Rubén Márquez (*doctor*), Alejandro Mohler "Vikingo" (*stunt man*)

**Notes:** a generally amusing film with several memorable sight gags, *El vampiro teporocho* is unfortunately undermined by a lazy script which

constantly switches direction and never focuses.

Count Dracula is sent into space by three mad scientists. Why? To protect Earth? Dracula is already in his coffin, staked through the heart, but



the 3 men put him into a spaceship anyway. The rocket is detonated in outer space, but the capsule containing Dracula separates and lands in Mexico. Experiencing some culture shock, the vampire has an unfortunate

encounter with a truck driver (who thinks Dracula is gay), but finally makes it to the capital. There, he meets a group of winos sitting around a fire. Topillos takes the foreign count under his wing, warning him of the dangers in late - 20<sup>th</sup> century blood (specifically, AIDS). Taking precautions—in the movie's first great sight-gag, Dracula puts condoms on his fangs and inflates them like two little balloons—the vampire attacks some prostitutes but is chased away and arrested.



After a brief stay in jail—during which Topillos takes the opportunity to sneak away from his blood-drinking guest—Dracula is flying through the streets in search of prey and smashes into a moving van (another good gag, his body makes a bat-shaped hole in the truck) driven by dim-witted Mantecas, Tripas, and Zopilote. Dracula makes them his minions, but the three men—while fearful of his powers—disrespect their new "Master" by feeding him hot chiles, which turn him into a turkey! Eventually he regains human form but has to work as a street performer for tips. At a nightclub, Dracula meets Afrodita, and they win a dance contest. Dracula enters her apartment afterwards,



first changing into a bat and then some sort of giant fly (with a cardboard photo of Dracula's face pasted on it, and pipe-cleaner legs). Afrodita undresses and steps into her bath (very brief, partially-obscured nudity), then

sprays the peeping vampire with insecticide! Dracula reverts to human form and crashes through her second-floor window, plummeting to the ground below, in front of his three tipsy human assistants. [Another laugh-evoking gag.]

Later, Dracula and the others pick up 4 bargirls in a club and take them home. Dracula bites his "date" and she chases him away with a mace (?). The vampire peeps into an adjoining room where Tripas is in bed with his girlfriend: she spots Dracula and orders him away from the window, causing him to involuntarily grab an electric wire and (once again) crash two stories to the ground, burnt black and knocking out his fangs (these are later replaced by a dentist). Taken to the hospital, Dracula causes the deaths of his roommates by drinking their transfusion blood. His nurse is Roxana, a vampire from the old country, lured to the New World by an unscrupulous suitor who then abandoned her. Dracula and Roxana become



romantic partners, robbing blood banks for their sustenance.

As seen from the synopsis above, *El vampiro teporocho*, after the introductory sequence, has essentially 3 parts—Dracula and Topillos, Dracula and his 3 dim-bulb friends, and Dracula and Roxana. The middle section is the longest and the most aimless and repetitive, with multiple scenes of Dracula and the others “performing” on the street (one final such bit is inserted later in the film, apparently out of continuity) and several repetitive



nightclub sequences.

Although the aimless script harms the overall impact of *El vampiro teporocho*, the film has some flashes of genuine humour. Pedro Weber is very good as Dracula, speaking archaic

Spanish, frequently emitting shrieks of “Eeeeeee!” (apparently imitating a bat), and demanding respect and trying to maintain his dignity while still attempting to “fit in” with the *lumpenproletariat* of Mexico City. The supporting cast is not given much to do, and Charly Valentino, Guillermo de Alvarado, and Humberto Herrera bumble and mumble their way through their scenes without being particularly memorable or amusing. Colucho and Gabriela Goldsmith are adequate in limited footage.

The special effects are satisfactory—some of them are done deliberately crudely for comedic impact, such as the laughable vampire-insect-- but the life-size Dracula dummy that “flies” in several scenes is quite well-done (it’s clearly on wires but you have to give the filmmakers



credit for going to this much trouble in any case). At other times they take the easy way out (clouds of smoke for Dracula’s transformation into a turkey) but there’s nothing bad enough to complain about.

In addition to the physical humour (despite having not seen this film for nearly 20 years until revisiting it for this review, I fondly remembered at least 2 of the sight gags, and they were still funny when I saw them again), there are a handful of contemporary jokes, some wordplay, and a bit of character-driven comedy. Rather surprisingly, other than the rather brief “street performer” scenes, there aren’t any obviously “canned” comic bits (where the actors resurrect their *carpa* or stand-up routines)—this was a common ploy in some comedies of the Eighties, but was toned down for *El vampiro teporocho*.



## Armagedón (El ángel de la muerte)

[Armagedon: The Angel of Death] (Prods. Potosí, 1994) *Assoc Prod*: Arturo Martínez [hijo], Gilberto de Anda; *Dir/Scr*: Gilberto de Anda; *Photo*: Arturo Bidart; *Music*: Dean St. Gilbert [Gilberto de Anda]; *Prod Mgr*: Juan Carlos Sánchez; *Asst Dir*: Alfredo Villa; *2nd Unit Dir*: Carlos Durán; *Film Ed*: Dean St. Gilbert [Gilberto de Anda]; *2nd Unit Photo*: Manuel Tejada; *Sound Engin*: Leonel Durán; *Action Co-ord*: José L. Quintero

**Cast**: Miguel Ángel Rodríguez (*Armagedón*), Arturo Martínez [hijo] (*Arturo Peralta*), Gilberto de Anda (*Vanaccek*), Gabriela del Valle (*Licenciada*), José Luis Becerra (*compadre*), Mario Arévalo (*editor Domínguez*), Claudia Bringas (*Claudia*), Alfredo Gutiérrez “El Turco” (*bishop*), José Luis Quintero (*priest*), Rosa María Rodríguez (*Rosa*), Fidel Abrego (*lycanthrope*), José L. Murillo (*don Esteban, Claudia’s father*), Humberto Martínez (*driver*), José Luis Chávez (*police cmdte.*), Walter Fuentes (*bouncer*), Silvia Valdez (*café owner’s wife*), Roberto Munguía (*café owner*), Martín Martínez (*morgue chief*), Roberto Morales (*cop*), Laura Coronel & Verónica Basurto (*prostitutes*)

**Notes**: quite a few years ago (at least 14, possibly more), I watched *Comillos de furia* on Telemundo and was baffled at the *videohome*’s apparent incoherence. It seemed to be a sequel, but to what? It certainly wasn’t related to *Colmillos--el hombre lobo* (1990), a theatrical release about a werewolf (coincidentally starring Miguel Ángel Rodríguez). This summer, I finally stumbled across the predecessor to *Colmillos de furia*--1994’s *Armagedón* (*El ángel de la muerte*) (released on DVD by Diamante Films as simply *El ángel de la muerte*, with cover art and text that in no way identifies it as a fantasy film). Although *Colmillos de furia* is still a sloppy, confusing mess, at least the plot makes a little more sense now that I’ve seen *Armagedón*. And, wonder of wonders, *Armagedón* itself is a decent direct-to-video horror movie, although hurt by a pointlessly inconclusive ending.



Gilberto de Anda, who wrote, directed, edited, composed the music score and played the villain in both films, is a member of the de Anda film dynasty. He seems to be a fan of the horror/fantasy genre: among his directorial credits are films and *videohomes* such as *Cazador de demonios* (excellent werewolf film), *Mi fantasma y yo*, *La noche de la bestia*, *Un paso al más acá*, *Masacre nocturna*, *El Santo--la leyenda del Enmascarado de Plata*, and *El chupacabras*. In *Armagedón* and *Colmillos de furia* he pays overt homage to Bram Stoker’s

"Dracula," the 1931 *Dracula*, and other instances of vampire pop culture.

Armagedón (I'm not sure if he's ever actually referred to by this name in this film) arrives at a roadside, open-air



café and shoots one of the customers multiple times with a shotgun, then cuts off the man's head with a very large knife and carries it off in a bag. He delivers the head to a bishop and a priest in a

graveyard, where it's revealed to be the head of a werewolf (the shooting and beheading take place out of the frame, but the victim's hands are shown becoming hairy during the assault), which is subsequently burned. Armagedón is paid for his work and departs.

Vampire Vanaccek picks up two hookers in a private club, takes them to his home, and bites one of them. Meanwhile, tabloid reporter Arturo is tipped off to the presence in the morgue of a headless corpse with hairy hands and feet. The morgue attendant says the man was shot with silver shotgun slugs. Arturo convinces his publisher (the "Licenciada") to assign him to the investigation, over the objections of his editor. However, the Bishop's assistant steals the werewolf's body from the morgue as part of the Church cover-up.

Vanaccek returns to the club for another victim, but Armagedón has tracked him down. He spikes the vampire's wine with holy water, but a clumsy waiter spills the drink, causing burns to the undead creature's leg. Vanaccek escapes before Armagedón can drive a wooden



stake through his heart. However, the vampire and the vampire-hunter have a confrontation in the parking garage of police headquarters, witnessed by Arturo and his

*compadre*, a police detective. Armagedón fires a crossbow bolt into Vanaccek's heart, causing him to dissolve into a pile of ashes (the vampire's leather motorcycle outfit is not affected).

Armagedón informs the Bishop that there were two witnesses to Vanaccek's destruction; the police can be controlled, and the Church decides to keep an eye on Arturo to make sure he doesn't reveal the truth. [In a very contradictory turn of events, Armagedón specifically says Vanaccek will not appear on Arturo's photos, but when the

reporter develops the film he says the vampire does show up.]

A young woman steals Vanaccek's ashes and clothes from the morgue, murdering the attendants. She lays out his clothes in a pentagram and prays to the devil, resulting in the resurrection of the vampire. [This is extremely illogical—she doesn't use the ashes, just his empty clothes and she merely says a few words, rather than spilling blood or something, a la *Dracula*—*Prince of Darkness* and *Santo y Blue Demon* vs. *Drácula y el Hombre Lobo*, for instance.] Vanaccek tries to seduce Arturo's boss, the Licenciada, but Arturo intervenes—wielding a tiny little silver cross—to save her...temporarily. Vanaccek visits the woman later that night and has her drink blood from his wrist, converting her into a vampire as well. [He slits his wrist with his claw-like fingernails—this scene is based on a similar sequence from the novel "Dracula."]

Vanaccek and the Licenciada abduct Claudia, Arturo's fiancée, on her wedding day. Arturo trails them to the vampire's house and shoots the Licenciada to death with wooden shotgun slugs (I guess he couldn't afford silver ones like Armagedón used on the werewolf).

Unfortunately, he uses all of his ammunition on her, and has none left for Vanaccek. Armagedón arrives and he and Vanaccek face off for the final time...and the film ends on a freeze frame as they lunge at each other! What th--?!!



Aside from this lame ending (which isn't "explained" in the sequel, either) and the occasional logical lapses mentioned above, *Armagedón (El ángel de la muerte)* is a fairly competent, interesting horror-action film. [By the way, at one point Armagedón calls Vanaccek the "angel of death," in case you were wondering about the title.] The low budget shows in the paucity of special effects, notably the lack of werewolf makeup in the opening sequence. The film is not completely cheap-jack: during the parking garage fight, Arturo's *compadre* shoots the vampire multiple times and the bullets are shown blowing holes in him but having no effect. The performances are generally satisfactory, as is the photography, music, location shooting, and so forth.

There are several interesting aspects of both *Armagedón (El ángel de la muerte)* and *Colmillos de furia* with respect to religion. While the Church is on the one hand rather ambivalently portrayed as a secretive organisation that carries out assassinations of demonic creatures, suppresses public knowledge of such things, influences the police, steals bodies from the morgue (knocking out the morgue guard to do so), indirectly threatens journalists who might reveal the truth, and so forth, on the other hand there are a number of scenes in



which the dialogue almost feels like it came from an overtly “religious” movie (the second film particularly). Vampire films traditionally have a lot of Christian content, but it feels like more than that, here.

Still, for the most part this is entertaining enough, paced effectively, and competently-made.



**Colmillos de furia** [Fangs of Fury] (Prods. Potosí, 1995) *Exec Prod:* Arturo Martínez [hijo]; *Assoc Prod:* Gilberto de Anda, Arturo Martínez [hijo]; *Dir-Scr:* Gilberto de Anda; *Photo:* Manuel Tejada; *Music:* Dean St. Gilbert [Gilberto de Anda]; *Prod Mgr:* Juan Carlos Sánchez; *2nd Unit Dir:* Carlos Durán; *Film Ed:* Dean St. Gilbert [Gilberto de Anda]

**Cast:** Miguel Ángel Rodríguez (*Armagedón*), Gilberto de Anda (*Vanaccek*), Arturo Martínez [hijo] (*Arturo Peralta*), Alfredo Gutiérrez “El Turco” (*Bishop*), Liliana Sierra (*Morgan*), José Luis Becerra (*compadre*), Fernanda Ambriz (?*Armagedón’s girlfriend*), Rojo Grau (*guru*), Claudia Bringas (*Claudia, Arturo’s wife*), Josué del Campo, José Luis Quintero (*priest*), Gabriela del Valle (*Licenciada*), Bernabé Palma (*third armed robber*) [Note: actors who appear only in flashback footage from *Armagedon* (*El ángel de la muerte*) are not credited.]

**Notes:** as mentioned in the previous review, I saw this film many years ago on Telemundo and was baffled by the narrative structure, which was loaded with incomprehensible flashbacks and loose ends. I subsequently discovered the predecessor to *Colmillos de furia*—*Armagedón* (*El ángel de la muerte*)—and the flashbacks (of which there are many--in one instance, a chunk of over 5 minutes is lifted from the first picture) were finally explained. But many gaps in the plot and logic remain.

Without information on the production history of *Colmillos de furia* I don’t know if star Miguel Ángel Rodríguez quit or otherwise left without shooting all of his assigned scenes--he does appear in significant new footage (not just flashbacks) and a plot thread is established for



him, but at some point he simply vanishes without explanation and never returns. To compensate, Arturo Martínez *hijo* becomes the “new Armagedón” and has a climactic showdown with vampire Vanaccek (he’s also put through a “training sequence” very

similar to what we’ve already seen Rodríguez undergo, which suggests the whole “successor” idea was not planned from the start).

*Colmillos de furia* begins with a shirtless Armagedón lying on a mattress in some sort of abandoned warehouse. He dreams about killing a werewolf (*first film footage*), as

well as a romantic getaway with a young woman. Visiting his employee, the Bishop, Armagedón refuses to execute the woman, even though the cleric says she practices black magic. Armagedón resigns, and returns to his lover, who suddenly has a demonic face and threatens him with a knife! He wakes up screaming, on the mattress. There is another flashback to his confrontation with vampire Vanaccek in a parking garage (*first film footage*).

Meanwhile, reporter Arturo narrowly avoids being killed while photographing a botched convenience-store robbery; his police-officer *compadre* saves him. [At one point, Arturo says vampire Vanaccek killed his boss, which is incorrect, it was Arturo himself who shot her! (After she’d been converted to vampirism, admittedly).] At this point the film splits into three alternating threads: Armagedón undergoes “training” in an old, abandoned building (later identified as a theatre) at the hands of a bearded guru; Arturo meets the Bishop, who tells him Armagedón is suffering from a kind of battle fatigue and Arturo has been chosen as his successor; Vanaccek is revived by sorceress Morgan (in a very vague manner—she plunges a dagger into a grave, that’s it).

After a few sequences, Armagedón’s sub-plot is dropped, with no resolution. He doesn’t appear again, except in flashbacks from the first movie. The Bishop takes Arturo to the same wrecked theatre and puts him through the same physical and psychological training Armagedón experienced. For example, Arturo has to confront disturbing images, like: his pregnant wife being groped by the priest assigned to protect her, his dead boss from the first movie, his dead *compadre*, and the sinister Morgan.



Vanaccek and Morgan argue. He believes the end of the world is coming soon, and wants to be truly dead so he can be judged and forgiven by God, rather than stuck in limbo between life and death. Morgan, on the other hand, insists he turn her into a vampire so she can have eternal life. Eventually, Vanaccek gives up and lets her drink blood from his wrist, converting her into a vampire.

[Interspersed between these scenes are flashbacks from the first movie, including one sequence lasting five minutes. During the final confrontation, there are six separate flashbacks, including one running over 3 minutes in length which basically summarises the first film.]

Morgan tries to murder Arturo’s wife but is stopped by Vanaccek, who breaks her neck. The vampire asks Claudia to pray for him. Vanaccek and Arturo have a sword duel (!), during which the vampire repeatedly disarms his opponent and then gives him the chance to pick up his weapon again. Finally, Vanaccek gets tired of this and just hands his own sword to Arturo, ordering him

to stab him to death. Before he dies, Vanaccek says his death means God has forgiven him.

*Colmillos de furia* is basically a mess. If the idea was to replace Miguel Ángel Rodríguez with Arturo Martínez *hijo* as the action hero of the piece, then most of the new Rodríguez footage should have been removed, because it just confuses matters. But then, of course, the film would have been much too short and Rodríguez is a much bigger “name” than Martínez, which might have hurt the product’s saleability.

Other than the narrative sloppiness and over-reliance on flashbacks, the biggest problem with *Colmillos de furia* is the transformation of vampire Vanaccek from villain to brooding anti-hero. Morgan is the chief menace in this film and while she’s nasty enough, she’s not given much to do, aside from argue with Vanaccek. Vanaccek does almost nothing “evil,” worrying more about how he can “really die” so he’ll be included on the roster of Souls to be Judged and Forgiven on Judgement Day.

Technically, *Colmillos de furia* is adequate. There are no special effects to speak of, but the photography, music, editing, etc., are acceptable if not noteworthy.



## TELEVISION TERRORS

**Con el miedo en las venas** [With Fear in the Veins] (Mexcinema, ©1990) *Exec Prod:* Carmen

Armendáriz; *Dir:* José Luis García Agraz (1, 4), Gerardo Prado [sic] (2), Juan Mora Catlett (3); *Scr:* Alfonso Herrera Peña (1), Gerardo Pardo (2), Juan Mora Catlett (3), Malú Huajuca [del Toro] (4); *Photo:* Miguel Garzón (1), Antonio Ruiz (2), Alberto Rentería (3), Erik Goethals (4)



**Cast:** 1. “ISP 44”—Carlos Bracho (*Lic. Carlos Beltrán*), Polo Salazar (*lawyer*), ?Belém Balmori (*Virginia O.*) [not sure which episode she appears in]; 2. “Galatremos en el

mar”—Carlos Espejel (*Manolo*), Claudia Fernández (*Nuria*); 3. “El revolver”—Roberto Sosa [Jr.] (*Sebastián*); 4. “Terror en tiempos de crisis”—María Rojo (*Francisca*), Salvador Sánchez (*José*), Dolores Berestain (*Mercedes*), Alejandra Peniche (*Manuela*); Sergio Bustamante (*host*)

**Notes:** Mexcinema Video released at least nine different videotapes in the 1990s which, although the packaging gave no hint of it, were compilations of episodes of the television series “La hora marcada.” This fantasy anthology series ran on Televisa in the late 1980s and, although shot on videotape, featured numerous

“name” performers and gave work to a number of directors and writers (including Carlos Cuarón, Guillermo del Toro, and others).

*Con el miedo en las venas* is introduced by Sergio Bustamante, but he shows up only at the beginning (though in fact, his intro was originally part of episode #3). The familiar “Woman in Black,” a mysterious figure who never speaks or really interacts with the characters, can be seen briefly in each episode.

#1: “ISP 44”—after her husband Fausto is killed in an industrial accident, Lucy is promised by the company that her child will receive a monthly stipend until she reaches maturity. After 2 years, however, the money stops. Lucy repeatedly attempts to confront owner Carlos Beltrán to ask for an explanation, but he refuses to see her. One evening she returns to company headquarters, and the doors lock behind her and the lights go off. Fausto, who is not dead but was horribly mutilated and has been living in hiding since the accident, has penetrated the building. Beltrán accidentally shoots and kills his assistant, thinking it is Fausto, and another company executive is found dead. Lucy’s husband allows her to leave, then confronts Beltrán with a briefcase full of “ISP 44,” apparently a radioactive substance the company was experimenting with—Beltrán and Fausto both die.



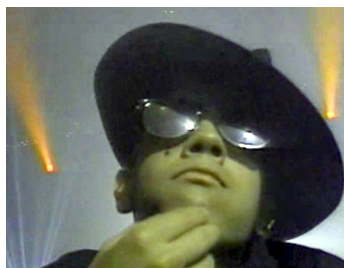
The conclusion of this episode seems to be an *homage* to *Kiss Me Deadly*—the briefcase, when opened, emits a blindingly bright light and has deadly effects on humans. Lucy’s husband himself is terribly scarred (excellent makeup), speaks with an odd voice, and remains calm as he carries out his plan. It’s not wholly clear what happened to him (although it was obviously the company’s fault) or why he waited 2 years for his revenge, but this is an effective story, well-directed and shot by, respectively, José Luis García Agraz and Miguel Garzón.

#2: “Galatremos en el mar”—Manolo dresses in black and seems to be only interested in horror (well, monster masks and such). His cousin takes him on a road trip to the beach resort of Ixtapa, where Manolo fails to fit in. Ejected from their hotel room one night (because his cousin is “entertaining” a young woman), Manolo wanders into a nightclub and sees singer Nuria perform. He develops a crush on her and fantasizes about a relationship, then accidentally meets her one day and they spend a pleasant afternoon together. Manolo’s cousin at first thinks Nuria exists only in Manolo’s imagination, but later returns to their hotel room and says he has also met her—and they have a date that night! Manolo kills his cousin as he’s taking a shower, then goes to the beach where Nuria



is waiting. He knocks her out, then carries her into the ocean. They both disappear beneath the waves.

This episode is odd—Manolo’s character is ill-defined and his overreaction at the end is consequently difficult to swallow. His “personality” consists of wearing a fedora, sunglasses, a black jacket, and black t-shirt with a white skull design, as well as occasionally putting on rubber monster masks (for no reason, and never for more than a



second or so). We get no indication he’s obsessed with death or violence or even horror movies. Yes, his cousin is a jerk (why he took Manolo with him in the first place is incomprehensible)

who wears an inappropriately skimpy bathing suit and tears up Manolo’s (stolen) photo of Nuria, but that doesn’t explain why Manolo also kills Nuria and commits suicide, unless he was really, really jealous and crazy (and, as noted, we aren’t given that much insight into his mind).

#3: “El revolver”—Western film fan Sebastián sees a news report about the theft of Billy the Kid’s pistol from a museum exhibition. Coincidentally, the photo of Billy the Kid looks just like Sebastián. Sebastián magically comes into possession of the gun (it’s inside his television!) and sets out to emulate his doppelganger by robbing a *casa de cambio* (money-changing shop), shooting a security guard as he does so. However, when Sebastián leaves the building, he’s assaulted and robbed by two thieves (one male, one female), who claim the shop was their target! They escape in their car, with Sebastián in pursuit...on his bicycle! Through the power of Billy the Kid or something, Sebastián shrugs off bullet wounds and shoots at the getaway car, causing a fiery crash. Then he leaps onto the flaming auto and dies. What?

This confusing tale is padded out to about 20 minutes (“La hora marcada” episodes were shown in half-hour time slots—this feature runs about 84 minutes, including the Bustamante introduction and an additional end-credits section), mostly by stretching the final chase far longer than necessary (or sustainable). There’s also rather too much ambiguity about the influence of the pistol on Sebastián, what caused him to suddenly decide to rob the *casa de cambio*, what exactly happens at the end of the episode, and so on.

#4: “Terror en tiempos de crisis”—“medium” José and his wife Francisca make a precarious living telling fortunes. Doña Mercedes comes to them in an attempt to learn the truth about the death of her granddaughter. José puts on séances, with Francisca hidden in the back room and providing the speaking voice of his spirit guide. However, Francisca goes “off script” and talks about the little girl’s death as if she had real information, which upsets José. Doña Mercedes is appreciative, however, and

puts José in her will, but at a subsequent séance she suffers a heart attack and dies (it’s been established earlier that she is not in good health). Francisca and José move into doña Mercedes’s house as the cook and gardener to the deceased lady’s son Raúl and his high-strung wife Manuela.

Francisca sees visions of the little dead girl, and when she accidentally breaks a vase and Manuela reacts violently, Francisca remembers her visions and deduces that Manuela murdered her step-daughter with garden shears because the child had broken a plate. Manuela pursues Francisca with the same deadly tool, but is subdued by Raúl and José, who arrive in the nick of time.

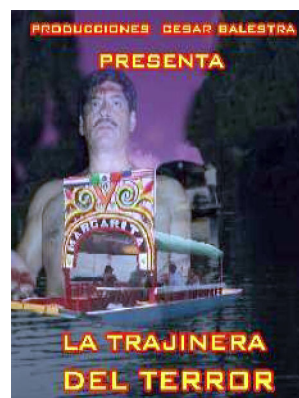


This episode is predictable but reasonably competent, thanks in no small part to good performances by Salvador Sánchez, María Rojo, Dolores Beristáin, and Alejandra Peniche. The “crisis” referred to in the title is the Mexican financial crisis of the late ‘80s, but has no particular bearing on the plot (José complains they’re having a hard time making a living due to the *crisis*, but gives no specifics).

None of the segments of *Con el miedo en las venas* is particularly memorable, and the production quality varies considerably (#3 looks terrible—on the video transfer at least—with washed-out colour, although the fiery car wreck might actually have been filmed just for this episode, which is surprising), however none of these were shot on film and thus all have that cheap, shot-on-video look. The best episodes are the first and last, perhaps not coincidentally because both were directed by José Luis García Agraz (although written and shot by different people).



## DIRECT TO VIDEO



### La trajinera del terror

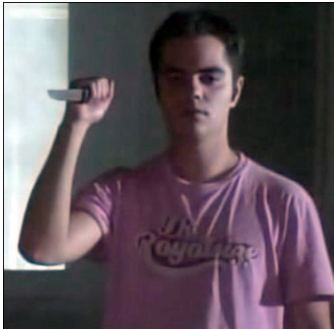
[The Flower Boat of Terror] (Diamante Films, 2005/©2006) *Exec Prod*: Amelia Durán; *Prod*: César Balestra Campuzano; *Dir*: Guillermo Lagunes; *Scr*: G.L. Barrera [Guillermo Lagunes]; *Photo*: Luis Lemus Sánchez; *Prod Mgr*: Jimene Ysadora Lagunes; *Asst Dir*: Viridiana Lagunes; *Film Ed*: Julio César Arrieta; *Sound Engin*: Hebert

Jiménez Vega; *Makeup*: Elizabeth G. Palafox

**Cast:** Miguel Ángel Rodríguez (*Sr. Francisco*), Valentín Trujillo Jr. (*Alan*), Liz Palafox (*Liz*), César Guerra (*Jorge*), Alejandra Adame (*Janet*), Paola Corona (*Eunice*), Paol Stanley (*Paol*), Javier Sobrino (*Man in Black*), Carmen Rosas (*Ysadora*)

**Notes:** this is really a terrible, frustrating, boring *videohome* that stretches about 20 minutes of “content” to 90 interminable minutes.

What is even more surprising, however, is that there are so many potentially positive elements and yet *La trajinera del terror* is still quite bad. The photography is generally good (sometimes very good), the music score—while almost certainly “canned”—is acceptable and occasionally better than that, and the interesting, unique Xochimilco



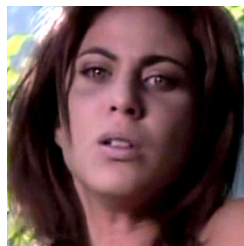
setting is one that hasn't been used too often. But the confusing, minimalist script, mind-boggling editing, and overall poor acting result in a difficult-to-watch experience.

Xochimilco, perhaps best-remembered in cinema as the setting of *Maria Candelaria*

(1943), is an area near Mexico City which retains the canals that had been present in the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán during the pre-Conquest period. The inhabitants raised flowers and vegetables on islands (at least some of them man-made, called *chinampas*) and took them to market on flat-bottomed boats called *trajineras*. The *trajineras* are now used mostly for tourism purposes, as seen in this film—they are brightly decorated and have tables and seats for parties, picnics, and so forth.

7 young people—3 men, 4 women—book a *trajinera* for the birthday celebration of Alan. After a time, Alan and Janet pull out a Ouija

board and begin to use it, although this upsets the others (especially Ysadora), who retreat to the far end of the boat. Alan and Janet are immediately possessed by some sort of evil spirit, for no discernable reason. Their



suspicious-acting boatman (*trajineras* are propelled through the canals with poles, like gondolas in Venice) leaps off the craft and vanishes into the woods. Rather than try to paddle or pole themselves back to civilisation, the young people scream frantically for assistance. Then they all go ashore and wander around, still shouting for help. Alan and Janet separate themselves from the group and continue to act possessed. Janet sneaks up on Ysadora—who has somehow allowed herself to lose the others—and cuts her throat. [Only a little smear of blood appears, but later when her corpse is discovered, the

makeup artist has had more time to work and the wound is large and gory.]

Eunice spots a large Rottweiler dog and immediately runs up and pets him! She then grabs the dog's chain and leads it around for most of the rest of the movie. She and



her new pet discover an old house, then rejoin Paol, Liz, and Jorge and take them there. Jorge had fallen into a ravine and injured his leg—he also narrowly avoided being stabbed by Alan. Alan and Janet

periodically snap out of their trances and wonder what's going on, but then return to their murderous condition.

[Also, from the very beginning of the film—even before the 7 young people arrive at Xochimilco—they've been shadowed by a weird guy in black. He continues to lurk around, basically doing nothing but lurking, until the latter part of the movie.]

Finally, 50 minutes into the picture, the young people arrive in a large, derelict old building. They meet Sr.

Francisco, who spends his time praying before a crude wooden image of Christ on the Cross. Francisco shows them his stigmata (the wounds of Christ, reproduced on his own body). He doesn't do anything, really, except pray and stare at the others. They stare at him, too. Jorge wanders into a hallway and is murdered by Alan. Liz is killed by Janet. Alan takes the knife and stabs Paol, then kills Janet! Eunice stabs Alan but Janet revives long enough to murder Eunice. Francisco dies, somehow, even though nobody stabs him. Then, suddenly everyone is alive but sort of look like they're hypnotised, and they get back on the *trajinera* and return to civilisation. The End.



I suppose you could summarise the plot as: the Devil (= Man in Black) uses a Ouija board to possess 2 young people, strands them and their 5 friends in the forest in Xochimilco, where they meet a religious mystic, and everyone is killed at the end. Or not. It's confusing.

But of course this synopsis doesn't begin to describe how the film is put together and how excruciating it is to watch. People stare at each other for long periods. They say the same thing 5 times in a row (sometimes the footage is repeated, sometimes they simply say their lines again and again). There are repeated cutaways to the Man in Black, to the inscrutable face of the *trajinera* boatman (in the opening section), to the black dog, to the wooden crucifix. Several scenes are speeded-up (possibly a technical glitch with the video transfer, but...who knows?).



The sound is deliberately distorted. There is a lot of fog, inside and outside. At times, *La trajinera del terror* almost looks like an experimental film: it has a dream-like



quality, where nothing is real and nothing makes sense. But it's only "nightmarish" in the sense that watching the film is an unpleasant experience—it isn't scary or thrilling or interesting.

*La trajinera del terror*

begins with a printed statement about traditions and legends of Xochimilco, and concludes with a printed epilogue referring to "Sr. Francisco," whose stigmata were never officially recognised by the Church but who was persecuted by the Devil for his faith until his death in 1910 (so—he was a ghost? Because this film is not a period piece at all), but these aren't particularly important or relevant to anything, unless the film is trying to say the Devil is still trying to get Francisco, so he duped these 7 young people into showing up and testing his faith? This suggests director/scripter Guillermo Lagunes (originally an actor) had some ambition, some idea of what he wanted the film to be, but the end result is unclear and—worse--tedious in the extreme.

Trivia notes: "Paul Stanley" is also known as "Paul Stanley," and is the son of ill-fated TV host Paco Stanley. Valentín Trujillo Jr. is obviously the son of actor Valentín Trujillo, and has managed to sustain his own performing career; Alejandra Adame is the only other member of the cast (aside from Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, clearly) to amass a significant number of film and TV credits. Everyone else apparently decided to seek a different path in life, more or less shortly after making *La trajinera del terror*. Good decision!



## CINEMATIC SPECTRES



### Viernes de ánimas: El camino de las flores

[Spirits' Friday: The Road of Flowers]  
(FIDECINE-Paranoid Pictures Studios, 2007)  
"Raul P. Gámez presents..." Exec Prod: Raúl P[érez] Gámez, Alberto Agnesi, Adrián Cervantez, Ricardo Madrazo; Assoc Prod: René Reynoso Andalón, Luis Omar Valle; Prod-Dir-Scr:

Raúl P. Gámez; Scr: Pedro Rodman, Raúl P. Gámez, [Pedro Ramírez Ceballos, uncredited]; Orig. Story: María del Carmen Ceballos [uncredited]; Photo: Isi Sarfati; Music: Janlu Prado; Prod Mgr: Arturo Coronado; Asst Dir: Katia Sánchez Aldana; Film Ed: Antonio Bribiesca; Art Dir: Paola Cortés

**Cast:** Pedro Rodman [Rodríguez] (*Andy*), Claudio Lafarga (*Hugo*), Iran Castillo (*servant*), Magda Guzmán (*doña Chelo*), Bianca Calderón (*Tere*), Estela Calderón (*Suleima*), Luciana P. Gámez (*ghost girl*), Amador Granados (*ghost Indian*), Guillermo Liceaga (*man in bathroom*), César Manjarrez (*truck driver*), Ángel Soto (*policeman*), Raúl P. Gámez (*bartender*), Miguel Ángel Saldaña

**Notes:** this is something of a "mystery" film. Apparently shot in 2007, it wasn't released theatrically until early 2011, but went on to earn \$4 million (according to IMDB) and be the tenth most popular Mexican movie of 2011 (according to CANACINE--for some reason, it's not listed at all on boxofficemojo.com). Very little information (including reviews) appears on the Web--one blog features a positive review and numerous hostile replies, harshly criticising the film's quality. These seem excessive to me: *Viernes de ánimas* is a reasonably interesting and entertaining supernatural film, made on a small scale but professional and not too predictable.

There are some vague hints the film might have been intended as the first of a series. It opens with voiceover narration which says contented people who die go to Heaven, but the spirits of those who die in anguish walk the Earth trying to obtain justice on "Spirit Fridays." One such story is "The Road of the Flowers." At the end of the movie, the protagonist passes along his "gift" (the ability to see and communicate with spirits) to another person.

The cast is small and has no major name performers: Iran Castillo is well-known from her *telenovela* and occasional film work, but isn't a star, and Magda Guzmán is a veteran character actress but once again not a marquee name, while the rest of the players are relative unknowns. Everyone is fine, although Castillo occasionally elicits a smile at her glum and disapproving demeanour (she's made up to be quite plain, and at times reminds one of a lurking vulture).

[WARNING: SPOILERS] Andy tells his friend Hugo he has what some call a gift (*don*) and others a curse (*maldición*)--he sees visions, sometimes premonitions of the future, sometimes the spirits of dead people. To get away from it all, Hugo drives Andy to Ensenada, where Hugo's mother, doña Chelo, lives. She has been depressed since the death of her husband. However, Andy's visions



increase in frequency and detail. He sees the ghost of a little girl (who has two distinct appearances, one disheveled and dirty, the other neat and clean, with no explanation) and the ghost of a rather fierce-looking *indio*. They direct him to the basement of doña Chelo's house, where Hugo's father had been digging a pit in the floor at the time of his death. Hugo believes there may be a treasure buried there, and despite Andy's warnings, he



decides to continue his father's excavation. Andy leaves but returns in time to see Hugo unearth a suitcase--which contains only dead flowers. Hugo accuses Andy of stealing the treasure and the two men struggle--Hugo falls on the point of a pickaxe and dies. Doña Chelo has a fatal heart attack. Andy asks doña Chelo's taciturn servant--who's been giving him bits of information about the ghosts throughout the film--to

explain (before she died, doña Chelo said "What servant?" so Andy knows she's also a ghost).

The servant says the spirits could only communicate with a pure soul such as Andy, and they needed him to achieve justice. The servant left her husband for an *indio*, taking her daughter with her (these are the other two ghosts, obviously). The cuckolded husband murdered all three of them, rolling up their corpses in blankets and stowing them on his truck (part of this was shown early in the movie, the rest in flashback as the servant tells her story to Andy). Andy is mortally wounded by a shotgun which falls out of a gun cabinet in the basement...

But he suddenly awakes, on the side of the highway.



He and Hugo were in an automobile accident--their car hit a truck parked across the roadway. Andy is dying of his injuries, but grasps Hugo's hand and transfers his powers to his friend before he passes away. As Hugo collapses of his own,

non-fatal, injuries, we see the truck driver being taken away in an ambulance--it's the man who killed the servant, the *indio*, and the little girl, and their blanket-wrapped corpses have spilled from the wreck onto the road, so justice will be served.

A week later, Hugo awakes in the hospital. As the film ends, he extends his hand to a spirit who appears, beseeching him wordlessly for help...

So, it seems these anguished spirits don't really care if someone dies helping them, as long as they get their justice? Hugo and (presumably) his mother didn't die (that

was an alternate reality or a vision or something) but Andy is definitely killed (in whatever reality) so the trucker could be caught. Except--why did Andy have to die for that? He could have survived the wreck and the result would have been the same. Also, it's not as if he deliberately caused the crash, knowing this would expose the murderer: either it was a true accident, or the ghosts themselves caused it. In either case, it doesn't seem as if Andy's psychic powers were really necessary at all.

The "twist"--the servant is also a ghost--is telegraphed fairly early. Andy is the only person who speaks to her or pays any attention to her in any way: even if she was beneath notice as a servant, she'd still be given orders by doña Chelo, at least.

The script, however, cheats both overtly and covertly. For example, we see the servant doing things (making Andy's bed, working in the kitchen) which--if she wasn't real--someone else would presumably



have to do, or the chores would go undone. Conversely, wouldn't Andy have noticed that--although the servant is always around (usually standing slightly behind doña Chelo)--she doesn't (for example) serve dinner? The film cheats by not showing anyone serving dinner, but we have to assume it was doña Chelo who did so, and yet this didn't seem odd to Andy? I mean, the servant is right there.

There are a number of other loose ends and incongruities--Andy's gift allows him to see (some) ghosts but also to (occasionally) see the future? (Neither of these abilities is consistent) What's up with the "treasure" in the basement? Did the ghosts plant that chest there simply to make Hugo go crazy and dig it up, with the resultant "deaths" of Hugo and Andy (which aren't permanent)? For that matter, what is the point of the whole middle section of the movie (in doña Chelo's house)? Nothing in this part has any bearing on the resolution of the ghosts-seeking-vengeance plot.

Technically not bad but narratively quite confusing, *Viernes de ánimas: El camino de las flores* is interesting and occasionally entertaining, but ultimately not very satisfying.



**El llanto de Helena** [The Cry of Helena] (Felipe Pérez Arroyo\*, ©2008) *Prod:* Felipe Pérez Arroyo; *Dir:* Óscar González Iñíguez; *Scr:* César Amador Zamora; *Photo:* Rafael Sánchez; *Music:* Rodrigo Dollan; *Prod Mgr:* Bernardo Rios; *Asst Dir:* Gabriel Rios; *Film Ed:* Carlos Villacaña (?); *Makeup:* Karla Acosta; *Sound:* Evert Jiménez



\*some sources cite La Raza Mex Films but this credit does not appear on the film itself

**Cast:** Regina Torné (*Isabela*), Fidel Zerda (*Juan Ramón*), Krizia Preciado (*Sonia*), Susana Parra “Sushu”



(*Helena Maldonado*), Arturo Dobarba (*Cenobio*), Luis Enrique Parra (*trucker*), Blanca Ferreira, José L. Enríquez

**Notes:** *El llanto de Helena* is an adequate supernatural videohome—boasting a scary ghost and some spooky sequences—but is harmed by an inconsistent script with many loose ends, and (to a lesser extent)

by the directorial style.

Oscar González has been directing films (mostly direct-to-video) for 20 years but I haven't seen any of his previous work, so I can't verify if *El llanto de Helena* reflects his usual filmmaking style, or if this film was specifically made in what he considered to be a “horror movie” manner. This looks like it was shot on a cell phone—not the quality of the cinematography, which isn't bad—but there are far, far too many extreme close-ups and attention-grabbing camera angles. If you have claustrophobia, *El llanto de Helena* is not for you—not because the action takes place in narrow, enclosed spaces, but because the photography makes it feel like it does.

Reporters Juan Ramón and Sonia investigate a series of fatal automobile accidents on “the Curve of Death,” which



seem to have begun nearly 20 years before. While Juan Ramón visits the site, Sonia discovers the accidents may be linked to a crash involving teenager Helena and her parents: although the two adults survived, Helena's body was never found. Juan

Ramón and Sonia both experience frightening events, then reunite in the city and visit the home of Isabela and Abel, Helena's parents, under false pretenses (they pretend to be representatives of a radio station's “prize patrol”). Sonia hears singing coming from a locked room in the house; she picks the lock but is knocked out when the door is suddenly slammed in her face.

The two reporters break in to the house that night. Sonia enters the room and sees elaborate murals and poetry, then confronts Helena's ghost. She passes out.

Isabela, awakened, tells them the story: years before, Isabela, Abel, and Helena were in their car, when Helena suddenly attacked Abel (her step-father), who was driving, causing an accident. Abel was injured (he remains paralysed even now), while Isabela was unhurt, but Helena's body could not be located. Isabela admits Abel sexually abused Helena.

Juan Ramón and Sonia return to the “Curve of Death,” and meet

farmer Cenobio, who says he found Helena's body after the crash, and has been praying for her soul ever since. Since their car has

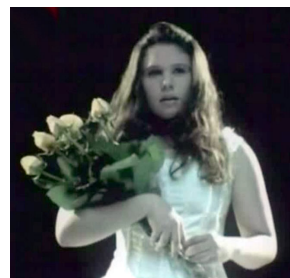


become disabled, Cenobio tells them to take his pickup truck and leave, but Helena's ghost appears and causes a wreck. Juan Ramón and Sonia, uninjured, are given a lift to the city by a friendly truck driver. Meanwhile, Isabela—controlled by Helena's ghost—suffocates Abel with a pillow, then steps out of a second-floor window and falls to her death.

Even from this bare-bones synopsis, some of the problems with *El llanto de Helena* should be obvious. Such as—why did Helena's ghost wait 20 years before avenging herself on her parents? Why did Helena's ghost cause multiple fatal accidents on the “Curve of Death?”

(Those people had nothing to do with her dying or the abuse she suffered)

Traditionally, ghosts haunt a particular place, but in this film Helena apparently splits her time between her former house and the isolated highway where she died, which doesn't make much



sense. Also, Helena's ghost looks different in each of these places: on the highway, she's spooky and bloody, while at home she more or less resembles a normal teenager (only bluish).

These are part of the larger problem, which is that *El llanto de Helena* doesn't seem to have a point. The “reveal” about Helena's death and its link to her step-father's abuse occurs too early to be a climax, and nothing is really resolved later (except Helena murders her parents, which—as noted above—seems rather arbitrary, occurring so long after the fact).

It's too bad, because even a half-assed explanation or conclusion would have helped. The film has some nice sequences (although they're based primarily on jump-scares, Helena's highway-ghost is creepy looking and

definitely effective), the acting is fine, the music score is particularly good, but the script simply doesn't add up.

One odd aspect of the movie is its fascination with cigarette smoking. Sonia smokes and Isabela smokes, but



Juan Ramón doesn't smoke—until he initially meets Cenobio and the mysterious *campesino* suggests he take up the habit. Why? It's not clear, but smoking keeps ghosts away, or...something? At the end of the movie, the truck driver who picks up

Juan Ramón and Sonia is smoking and helpfully gives Sonia a cigarette when she asks, and he also says smoking is helpful!? As a non-smoker who figuratively cringes when people in movies light up, this felt very weird to me, and no clear linkage between smoking and supernatural protection is ever established.

As mentioned, the performances are generally good. Regina Torné had a fairly substantial career in the Sixties and Seventies, then largely vanished from sight until the



early 1990s, when she appeared in mega-hit *Como agua para chocolate* (1992). She is pretty good in *El llanto de Helena*, looking somewhat younger than her age, and is given a decent range of emotions to

work with (when she thinks she's won a radio contest, she's very excited and happy; then later exhibits irritation, consternation, remorse, fear, etc., which are more effective because we've been introduced to her in a "normal" mood). The rest of the cast is hardly composed of

household names, but everyone delivers their lines in a satisfactory manner. The relationship between Sonia and Juan Ramón—co-workers who banter and joke, rather than a romantic couple—is believable enough. Sonia does have one bizarre scene: immediately after her confrontation with Helena's ghost, Sonia asks Juan Ramón "you don't believe in ghosts, do you? Me either." What? You just saw one! (There is also a mildly humorous bit where Juan Ramón, searching for something to give Isabela as her "radio prize," finds a vibrator in Sonia's purse and gives that to the older woman, as a "massager").

This isn't bad, but a more fully-developed script would have improved it immensely.



## MYSTICAL MOVIES

### *El ombligo de la luna* [The Navel of the Moon]

(Prods. Volcán\*, 1985) *Dir:* Jorge Prior; *Scr:* Juan Mora [Catlett], Jorge Prior; *Photo:* Marco Antonio Ruiz; *Music:* Jorge Reyes; *Prod Mgr:* Sonia Valezuela; *Asst Dir:* Antonio del Rivero; *Film Ed:* Juan Mora [Catlett], Jorge Vargas; *Art Dir:* Gabriel Pascal; *Makeup:* Angelina Méndez Chagoya; *Addtl. Photo:* Toni Kuhn; *Sound:* Carlos Aguilar

\*this credit may have been added later (for video release); in an interview, director Prior indicates the film was made under the auspices of the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (where he was on the faculty for a number of years)

**Cast:** Ángeles Marín (*Guadalupe*), Darinka Ezeta (*América*), Ignacio Guadalupe (*Ricardo*), Antonio del Rivero (*Azcaná*), Ernest Schwartz (*Hernán*), Julia Alfonzo (*Bertha*), Julio Monterde (*Executive no. 1*), Carlos Romano (*Executive no. 2*), Raquel García (*mountain woman*), Salvador Garcini (*injured man*), Leticia Valenzuela (*grotto woman*), Antonio Trejo (*Huitzi chief*), Anselmo Galindo (*police chief*)

**Notes:** produced as an entry in the III Concurso de Cine Experimental, sponsored by IMCINE, *El ombligo de la luna* was shown briefly at the Cineteca Nacional in 1986 as part of the contest. It was finally released theatrically in 1989, two years later than most of the other Concurso features. Aside from a disappointing non-ending, this is entertaining and not as "arty" as one might expect.

After a (non-specific) apocalyptic event, Mexico City is the only populated city in the world, and even it is a sparsely-inhabited shambles. Guadalupe, América, and Ricardo travel "north of the border"



to obtain a piece of equipment (later shown to be a computer) that will allow them to determine the location of the legendary Aztlán, birthplace of the Aztec people—Aztlán will become the new capital of the world. On their way back, they're stopped by "La Migra" and robbed of a component of the computer; however, someone mysteriously comes to their aid and shoots the bandits, allowing them to continue their journey in their camper. Back in the city, they rescue a man from the Huitzis, a gang that extracts blood from people, and he introduces them to Azcaná and his group.

They feed historical data into the computer, which functions even though one piece is missing. The stolen component is replaced by executives of a mysterious corporation, who want to develop Aztlán for their own benefit: Guadalupe's boyfriend Hernán makes a deal with them, over her objections. Four locations are generated by



the computer: Ricardo and América have to leave in the camper without Guadalupe, who is being pursued by Hernán, the executives, and their henchmen. However, Guadalupe is rescued by Azcaná, and they leave the city on his motorcycle.

Ricardo and América visit Tamoanchan, “the place of women,” and spend the night in an underground grotto. Meanwhile, Guadalupe and Azcaná go to Uitztlampa, “the place of thorns” (cactus-style) and are given a rabbit as a spirit-guide, but it ducks into a burrow and escapes.

Ricardo and América’s next stop is Mictlan, “the place of the dead,” and—sure enough—Ricardo wakes up one morning and discovers América has died. He returns to the city. Guadalupe and Azcaná arrive at Tlalocán, “earthly paradise,” and Guadalupe wants to give up her quest and live there, but



is told by the Mayan inhabitants she must continue her quest in the capital.

Back in Mexico City, Guadalupe learns Hernán has stolen the computer, but she is able to ascertain the location of Aztlán using two halves of a circular medallion (she had one half, Azcaná had the other): Aztlán is located beneath the city! (The entrance is, logically enough, at Calle Aztlán) Eluding Hernán and the executives, she and Azcaná enter a hidden pyramid and find a chamber with a large stone carving and place their medallion there. Guadalupe and Azcaná are last seen paddling a canoe through the canals of Xochimilco, passing by an altar to the dead which bears their photographs.

Most traditional narrative films would have given us a bit...more at the conclusion. I’m not asking for a laser light-show when the stone medallion (about the size of a dessert plate) is inserted into the larger floor-mounted stone wheel (although that would have been cool), but almost literally nothing happens. Azcaná finally talks (a bit—“the name of Mexico is the key...navel of the moon. The center of everything”), and he and Guadalupe kiss, then there is a series of flashbacks, and then Guadalupe says (in voiceover) “I could never return to reveal Azcaná’s secret...in the pyramid I collapsed (?)...by the 13 heavens (*cielos*) and 9 places under the earth...until life is found again.” [My translation may be flawed and it’s possible I’m missing the point entirely, but...who knows?]

And then the final shot of Guadalupe and Azcaná in Xochimilco means...? At first I said, “oh, it means getting back to the land, living a simpler life,” but then they row past the altar to the dead—with their photos on it—which seems to suggest they are deceased? (In the preceding montage, there is a shot of a smaller display containing América’s photograph, and she’s definitely dead.)

Aside from this not inconsequential but not devastating problem, *El ombligo de la luna* is fairly entertaining and not overly self-conscious, pretentious, or serious. There are elements which, in a more exploitative, commercial

film would have been more prominent: the Huitzi gang (who dress in an amalgam of traditional indigenous costumes and punk outfits) and their blood-drinking (in one scene, Azcaná gives them a syringe-full of his blood, which seems to satisfy them), the evil executives and their “corporation” (and their thugs, who are dressed like *mariachis* for some reason), the semi-official “Migra” who plunders travelers (and spray the camper with disinfectant, in case it is bringing back some disease from “the north”), and so on. The scenes in the ruined Mexico City are quite effective although done on a small scale: deserted streets, collapsed buildings, the occasional bizarre visual non-sequitur (a cotton-candy vendor strolling along). The “advanced computer” retrieved from what appears to be a department store show window is imaginatively designed: rather than a traditional box with dials and buttons, it’s a series of colourful geometric shapes stacked up.



Director Prior and his crew add a number of small but effective touches. “Guadalupe” and “América” are significant names, as is “Hernán” (as in *conquistador* Hernán Cortés). Ricardo’s camper has a large portrait of



the Virgin of Guadalupe on its roof. The four places visited by the explorers are all traditional, legendary locations in Aztec mythology.

The main characters are individualised nicely.

América and Ricardo are brother and sister, and as they go on their quest, América consistently forges forward while Ricardo urges caution. Guadalupe is apparently just their friend, since she already has a boyfriend, the sleazy Hernán. At one point, she breaks up with him and he returns with some *mariachis* (to serenade her) and a bouquet of flowers: although Guadalupe refuses to admit him to her apartment, after he leaves she recovers the flowers and says “How tender!” To the consternation of América and Ricardo, she is repeatedly deceived by Hernán, who is in the pay of the corporation. So although this isn’t a “drama” where anyone gets a lot of time for soul-searching, each person has a personality of sorts, which is nice. While none of them became famous, Ángeles Marín, Ignacio Guadalupe, and Darinka Ezeta have all maintained professional acting careers in the ensuing 30 years since *El ombligo de la luna*.

Overall, odd but worth a look.

**Trivia note:** in 1991, Jorge Prior was executive producer of *Retorno a Aztlán*, a film whose title would have also been appropriate for *El ombligo de la luna*. The

director was Juan Mora Catlett, and the crew included a number of people who had worked on the earlier movie: Toni Kuhn (cinematographer), Jorge Vargas (editor), and Gabriel Pascal (art director). However, *Retorno a Aztlán* was a period film set in the pre-Conquest era, not a post-apocalyptic tale.



### Rito terminal [Terminal Rite] (UNAM-



CONACULTA-  
IMCINE-CUEC-  
FFCC, 1999) *Exec*  
*Prod*: Walter Navas;  
*Dir-Scr*: Óscar Urrutia  
Lazo; *Photo*: Ciro  
Cabello; *Music*: José  
Navarro; *Prod Mgr*:  
Juan Robles; *Asst Dir*:  
José Luis Gutiérrez  
Arias; *Film Ed*: Manuel  
Rodríguez; *Art Dir*:  
Lorenza Manrique; *Set*  
*Decor*: Ivonne Fuentes;  
*Makeup*: Hilda  
González; *Sound*:

Gustavo Patiño

**Cast:** Guillermo Larrea (*Mateo Ledesma*), Soledad Ruiz (*doña Gloria*), Ángeles Cruz (*Celia; Guadalupe*), Rafael Velasco (*older Emiliano*), Guillermo Rios (*Joaquín*), Antonio Monroí (*Moro*), Fabiana Perzabal (*Mariana*), Miguel Couturier (*Günter*), Ignacio Guadalupe (*The mestizo*), Javier Zaragoza (*Manuel, Celia's boyfriend*), Fernando Becerril (*priest*), Martín Palomares (*agente municipal*), Gabriel Pascual (*sacristán*), Juan Menchaca (*hotel clerk*), Pedro Adame (*younger Emiliano*), Olga Cuevas (*Guadalupe age 5*)

**Notes:** *Rito terminal* is a well-made and interesting film, although in the end rather confusing, which keeps it from being exceptional. Nominated for 13 Ariel Awards (including Best Film), although it won only one (Best Supporting Actress, Fabiana Perzabal), this was largely shot in the state of Oaxaca, and contains a lot of dialogue in the Mixteca language (sub-titled in Spanish).

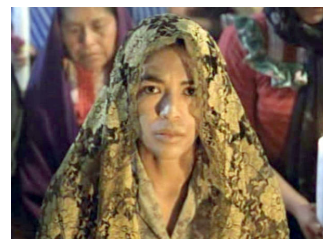
[This film has a complex flash-back structure, which I have not attempted to reproduce in this synopsis.] Photography Mateo is part of a team documenting the annual festival in a Oaxacan village. He takes a Polaroid and gives it a young woman, Guadalupe, which earns him a sour look from doña Gloria (Guadalupe's grandmother). Guadalupe sneaks off with a young *mestizo* (most of the villagers are indigenous people and speak Mixtec among themselves); doña Gloria sends Moro and a friend to run the interloper out of town, but things get out of hand and Moro kills the man with a machete (to be fair, the *mestizo* was reaching for a pistol in his truck). The town council agrees to hush up the matter. At the funeral service, Mateo takes photos and is startled to see someone resembling

Guadalupe in the front row and then reflected in a pane of glass. He accidentally knocks over some candles and nearly sets a statue of the village's patron saint on fire. Before leaving the church, Mateo spots a Polaroid tacked to the wall near the altar—it looks like Guadalupe and a little girl. He takes the picture with him. Mateo goes to a wake at doña Gloria's house and is given something to drink which causes him to hallucinate. [Whose wake? Guadalupe's? It's not clear, but probably—she shows up various times afterwards but these appear to be imaginings of Mateo, and very near the end of the film there is a suggestion she'd committed suicide in the river.]



Mateo, dazed, returns to Mexico City the next day. Many of the photographs he took are strangely blurred and double-exposed. He plays a video taken during the funeral and prints out a screen-cap of the mourner who looks like Guadalupe. He also discovers he casts no shadow, but his

wife Mariana dismisses this as a trick of the light. Using the excuse that he needs to re-shoot photographs at the village's follow-up festival, Mateo decides to return to Oaxaca. Once there, he begins to lose his



reflection as well as his shadow. Villagers Emiliano and Joaquín try to help him, but doña Gloria and Moro are still hostile.

Eventually, a back-story is revealed. Years before, doña Gloria's daughter Celia had given birth to a little girl—Guadalupe—then left the village for the outside world. When Guadalupe was 5 years of age, Celia and her *mestizo* boyfriend Manuel returned to claim the little girl. Doña Gloria asked her son

Emiliano to prevent them from leaving; Emiliano shot and killed Manuel. Celia and doña Gloria argue and Celia is accidentally killed as well. Now, it appears Celia's ghost has

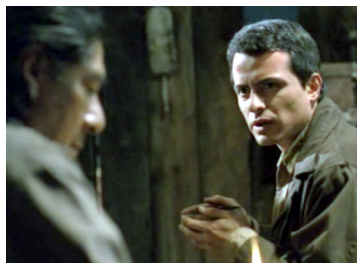


returned (it was she whom Mateo saw in the church, since she's identical in appearance to the grown-up Guadalupe). Doña Gloria tries to kill Mateo but he's saved by a wooden mask Emiliano had given him; doña Gloria collapses and dies. Mateo recovers his shadow. Back in the city, he reviews the video tape of the funeral, and Celia's image has been replaced by that of an anonymous village woman



(although the screen-print photo Mateo made still bears Celia's face).

The motivating force for the events of *Rito terminal* is never stated. Prior to viewing the film, and strictly based on brief descriptions of the plot, I'd assumed Mateo broke



a rule of the indigenous community by photographing things he wasn't supposed to, and this was the reason he "lost his shadow." Although there are a few instances where Mateo is rebuked for taking pictures, this

isn't the reason he's punished. Nor is it his accidental torching of the *santo* in the church (which caused little visible damage, and Celia's ghost was really to blame, anyway). Why Celia and/or doña Gloria chose Mateo as a pawn in their scheme(s) isn't obvious. A few people tell Mateo his "spirit is weak" or something, but he's not depicted as especially shallow (not any more so than the other "outsiders" seen in the film, any way). He's friendly to Guadalupe but has no ill intentions and spends perhaps one minute dealing with her (unlike the *mestizo*, who has given her a gold necklace and briefly gropes her in his truck).

The purpose of Mateo's "quest" in the movie is also vague. He learns a few things about indigenous culture and spirituality, but—as noted above—isn't depicted as a crass and uncaring person to begin with, so it's not as if he "deserved" to go through an ordeal in order to be taught a lesson. It seems more likely that Celia's ghost was trying to avenge herself on doña Gloria, because her mother was repeating—with Guadalupe—the pattern of behaviour that resulted in the deaths of Celia's boyfriend and Celia herself. Guadalupe's suicide was more or less directly the result of the murder of the *mestizo* and doña Gloria's overbearing personality, so apparently Celia's spirit determined the time was right to punish the older woman. Exactly why she needed Mateo (and what he was expected to do) is pretty nebulous, though.

Technically (in addition to narratively), *Rito terminal* is put together in an intricate and interesting fashion. The "magic realism" aspects are not blatant or prevalent, but they can be discerned, and the flashbacks are fragmented and oblique, rather than telegraphed and obvious. For instance, in one scene, Mateo is in doña Gloria's hut and gets up to walk towards the door, but then the camera pans back across the room to show he is still sitting down—and staring at his "double!" Later, Mateo drives away in his rental car, and the sideview mirror reflects an image from the past in that same location.

Production values are fine, with good use of locations and especially nice sound design. The performances are very good for the most part, although I'm kind of puzzled by Fabiana Perzabal's Ariel—she's attractive and handles

her role effectively, but it's a minor, rather peripheral role at best, and she's given literally nothing special to do. It's a little easier to understand the nominations of Guillermo Larrea—who is the main character—and Ángeles Cruz (who plays dual roles quite distinctively), although neither won.

Although at times confusing (and it's not just me, numerous critics and commenters online mention this as well), *Rito terminal* holds one's interest throughout.

Trivia note: coincidentally, at least two people who worked on *El ombligo de la luna* also worked on *Rito terminal*: Ignacio Guadalupe acts in both films, and Ciro Cabello worked on the sound unit of *El ombligo de la luna* and was director of cinematography on *Rito terminal* (earning an Ariel nomination in the process).



## BLUE DEMON SCIENCE FICTION

**Blue Demon y las invasoras\*** [Blue Demon and the Women Invaders] (Cin. RA, 1968) *Prod:* Rafael



Pérez Grovas; *Dir:* Gilberto Martínez Solares; *Scr:* Raúl Martínez Solares [on-screen credit; print sources usually indicate director Gilberto Martínez Solares did the adaptation]; *Story:* Rafael Pérez Grovas; *Photo:* Raúl Martínez Solares; *Music Dir:* Gustavo C. Carrión; *Prod*

*Chief:* Julio Guerrero T.; *Sub-Dir:* Manuel Muñoz; *Film Ed:* Gloria Schoemann; *Decor:* Carlos Granjean [sic]; *Camera Op:* Cirilo Rodríguez; *Lighting:* Horacio Calvillo; *Makeup:* María del Castillo; *Sound Supv:* James L. Fields; *Dialog Rec:* Francisco Alcayde; *Re-rec:* Galdino Samperio; *Union:* STPC; Eastmancolor

\*aka *Blue Demon y las seductoras* [alternate version]

**CAST:** Blue Demon, Gilda Mirós (*Nora*), Regina Torné (*Narda*), Agustín Martínez Solares [Jr.] (*Raúl Cárdenas*), Enrique Aguilar (*businessman-hostage*), Gina Morett (*Nadia*), Raulito [Raúl Martínez Solares Jr.] (*shepherd boy*), Oscar Morelli (*Adolfo, scientist-hostage*), José Martí (*van driver-hostage*), Guillermo Ayala, René Barrera (*hotel employee*), Marco Antonio Hernández, Raúl Pérez Prieto, Gerardo Castillo, Griselda Mejía (*Nereida*), Sandra Boyd (*Nita*), Juan Salazar, Carlos Ramírez, Miguel Fernández, Antonio Miranda, Carlos León (*impresario*), Leobardo Castillo, Dorrell Dixon (*wrestler*), Juan Garza (*wrestler; hotel employee*)

**NOTES:** Cin. RA is mostly known for the long-running "Chanoc" series, which got worse and worse as time went on, as well as a couple of feeble late Santo movies, and a handful of miscellaneous pictures, none particularly good. As would be expected, *Blue Demon y las invasoras* isn't a really good movie, but it is decent entertainment. The script contains some interesting (if not especially original) ideas, and Blue is given a fair amount to do and is clearly the primary hero (although he doesn't appear until more than 20 minutes have passed).

The biggest drawbacks are the horrible "special effects," but this brings up an interesting point: is it better to "borrow" decent special effects footage from other (foreign) films like Sotomayor did, or to create your own (lousy) special effects as in Cinematográfica RA's pictures? The "flying saucer" in *Blue Demon y las invasoras* is mostly represented by a superimposed blob of light (when the two saucers have a "dogfight" at the end of the movie, the results are pathetic), and "outer space" appears to be some out-of-focus crystals arranged into a kind of design. Curiously, the producers opted for several underwater sequences actually shot in a tank, a surprising bit of competency. The other production values are adequate, utilising Estudios Churubusco sets and the backlot, as well as some location shooting at Lagunas de Zempoala in Morelos (a national park about an hour from the capital).

Five women (whose names all begin with "N"--good idea) arrive on Earth in a flying saucer, which is hidden on the bottom of a lake (good idea). A plague has wiped out most of the males on their planet; if Earth men are immune to the virus, they can be used to create a vaccine and help repopulate the Women Invader's world (good idea). However, instead of asking for volunteers, the spacewomen (all hot babes, by the way, what're the odds

of that?) disguise themselves as Earth women so they can seduce and abduct male victims.

[Note: this film was also released in a "nude-scenes" version (outside of Mexico) as *Blue Demon y las seductoras*. Instead of the space-women simply kissing their victims and transporting them to their flying saucer, the nude version has them strip down and hop into bed with the men (see detail from pressbook). That's the method of abduction I'd prefer, given a choice.]



Nora, Narda, Nita, Nereida and Nadia take over lakefront Hotel Paraíso (it's out of season, which explains the lack of other customers), hypnotising the employees to provide ready-made henchmen in case a wrestler-superhero might happen by, or something. [This is a standard ploy in films with female antagonists, e.g., *Santo contra las mujeres vampiro*, *Atacan las brujas*, and so on. Can't be beating up on women, even if they are evil.]

A businessman (Nora's target), delivery driver (Nereida's target—he's really reluctant, but finally succumbs to her allure), and scientist Adolfo (Nita's target) are kidnaped; fourth space-woman Nadia fails because *her* target—a talent agent—couldn't handle her sex-appeal and died of a love overdose (or something—she gets a hilarious look on her face after she kisses him and he drops dead). The fifth invader, Narda, falls in love with her intended victim, police official Raúl. After their first date—attending a Blue Demon wrestling match—they return to the lodge. But instead of kissing him and teleporting him to the sunken saucer, she locks Raúl in a hotel room so she doesn't have to share him. She lies to Nora, saying there was no opportunity to abduct Raúl.

Blue Demon tracks Raúl to the Hotel Paraíso and they escape. A little



shepherd boy tells them he saw something fall into the lake, and then some pretty women appeared on shore. Blue, luckily, always carries scuba gear in the trunk of his white Mustang, and begins an underwater investigation. Narda swims out of the saucer and nearly drowns him: he barely makes it back to shore.

Blue and Raúl confront Narda at the hotel. Although she considers most earthlings "*retrasados mentales*" (mentally retarded), Narda decides to betray her whole planet, doom her race to extinction, and stay on Earth with



Raúl. [Towards the end of the film, when Nora tries to explain their expedition's motives to Blue Demon, Blue basically tells her "Tough luck! We don't care about your planet."] Although Narda and Blue are captured when they return to the saucer to free the other hostages, Nita later releases all of them except her main squeeze Adolfo, whose scientific genius will help her conquer "outer space"



(and hopefully some planets, too). After running around in the woods for a while—the Women Invaders now have super-guns that shoot flames and cause large boulders to explode in a cloud of smoke, while Blue counters with Molotov cocktails—the earth people appear to finally have the upper hand.

However, Nita and Adolfo try to escape in the saucer, on their way to conquer the universe. The irate

Queen sends a second spaceship that blasts them out of the sky. The stranded spacewomen (including Narda) are all vaporised as well. Earth is saved (not that it was ever really in any danger). As the second flying saucer departs, Blue pessimistically comments: "I'm sure they'll return. We have to be prepared for the day that happens!"

*Blue Demon y las invasoras* doesn't drag (although the female tag-team wrestling match is really just padding) and the scenes of the space women seducing their victims are amusing (too bad the nude version hasn't turned up yet). There is also a fair amount of decent physical action, courtesy of the beefy hotel employees under the spacebabes' control. Agustín Martínez Solares Jr. and Blue Demon fight these guys separately, and then together, and the tussles are fairly spirited.

The script contains a number of loose ends and continuity errors. Early in the movie, it's stated that 10 men need to be abducted. There are 5 male employees of the Hotel Paraíso, but for whatever reason they are not to be included in the gene pool (Nora says they'll be released from their hypnotic state when the women depart). Also, it's unclear if the first 5 "targets" were specifically chosen in advance--Narda suggests they find a substitute for Raúl, since it doesn't matter who is kidnaped (Nora refuses, but mostly because Raúl is investigating the previous disappearances).

The Queen of the Women Invaders obviously didn't do a very good job of vetting her female commandos, since 2 of the five betray their mission—Narda, who falls in love

with Raúl, and Nita, who falls in love with Adolfo. That's a 40 percent failure rate!

The Women Invaders "pop" in and out of their submerged flying saucer using teleportation technology, but in one scene Nita returns to the saucer by wading into the lake and (presumably) swimming there, emerging from the craft's "moon pool" (which allows divers to exit and enter marine craft)—completely dry, of course. This is the way Narda earlier leaves the ship to battle Blue Demon underwater, but that's because he was scuba-diving and I guess she couldn't teleport to the bottom of the lake. Later in the film, the teleportation device is disabled by the treacherous Nita, so Nereida has to swim to the saucer rather than "pop" in (and dies doing so), but it's never clear why Nita didn't teleport there herself.

Trivia notes:

(1) the first victim has a painting of a thunderstorm on the wall of his office. This painting can be seen in numerous 1960s films shot at the Churubusco studios. The talent agent has large photographs of María Eugenia Llamas "La Tucita" and Silvia Derbez on his office wall.

(2) during both of the wrestling matches in this film, there are about 3 rows of "live" spectators in the arena seats, but the back rows are filled with cardboard cut-outs of people.

(3) Juan Garza has a dual role: he wrestles under his own name in the tag-team match against Blue Demon and Dorrell Dixon, but simultaneously plays one of the hotel employees hypnotised by the Women Invaders.

(4) the little shepherd boy is played by "Raulito" (Raúl Martínez Solares *hijo*, son of the cinematographer, cousin of the actor playing "Raúl," and nephew of the film's director). He also appears in *Santo y Blue Demon contra los monstruos* (also directed by Uncle Gilberto and photographed by Dad) and a couple of other Martínez Solares family films. He's basically terrible, barely able to utter his lines and looking completely clueless at all times. "Tucita" he's not. Fortunately, he only appears in two



sequences.

(5) Gina Morett sings [lip-syncs] a whole song ("Ángel negro," by Gustavo Pimentel) as an audition for the talent agent. This was apparently a commercial recording done by Morett, who maintained parallel acting and singing/dancing careers.

Certainly not a great film, but overall an entertaining one.



## Pasaporte a la muerte [Passport to Death]

(Estudios América-Prods. Corsa, 1967) *Prod*: Emilio Gómez Muriel; *Dir*: Alfredo B. Crevenna; *Scr*: Alfredo Ruanova; *Story*: Emilio Gómez Muriel, Alfredo Ruanova;



*Photo*: Alfredo Uribe; *Music*: Antonio Díaz Conde; *Prod Mgr*: Luis García de León; *Co-Dir*: José Luis González de León; *Film Ed*: Raúl J. Casso; *Art Dir*: José Méndez, Octavio Ocampo; *Camera Op*: Carlos Morales; *Asst Cam*: Eduardo Rojo; *Dialog Rec*: Víctor Rojo; *Music/Re-rec*:

Heinrich Henkel; *Recordist*: Francisco Guerrero; *Script Clerk*: José Delfos; *Union*: STIC

**Cast**: Blue Demon (*Blue Demon*), Ana Luisa Peluffo (*Laura*), Eric del Castillo (*android*), Maura Monti (*Nora*), Carlos East (*Julio*), Héctor Gómez (*Lafarge*), José Gálvez (*Marcus*), Napoleón Deffit (*David*), Bruno Rey (*Colonel*), Mario Orea (*Professor Bellini*), Carlos Monden (*Vélez*), Raquel Bardiza [sic] (*Kitty Martin*), Nothanael León "Frankenstein" (*Troglodita*), René Barrera (*henchman*), Antonio Padilla "Picoro" (*ring announcer*), El Klan (*band*), ?Leonor Gómez (*wrestling spectator*), Rubén Márquez (*doctor*), ?Bruno Rey (*dubs Blue Demon*)

**Notes**: Emilio Gómez Muriel's Prods. Corsa was responsible for the Neutrón series, the "Rocambole" superhero films, *Gigantes planetarios* and *La planeta de las mujeres invasoras*, and various Westerns, comedies, adventure films and melodramas between 1955 and 1967. Gómez Muriel directed some of these himself, while the rest were handled by Federico Curiel, Alfredo B. Crevenna and other directors. The final films under the Corsa banner were made in 1967, *Blue Demon--destructor de espías* and *Pasaporte a la muerte*.

Part of the world-wide spy-film craze triggered by the success of the "James Bond" movies, the two "Destructor de espías" pictures were very similar in concept to *Operación 67* and *El tesoro de Moctezuma*--made the previous year--which teamed masked wrestler El Santo and handsome Jorge Rivero as "secret agents" (Rivero repeated his role as Bond-clone Jorge Rubio in one additional film without El Santo, *Alerta, alta tensión* in 1967). One consequence of this is that Blue Demon has to

share the spotlight with his civilian partner, Carlos East. While the two men are portrayed as equals, East handles most of the romance and light-hearted banter, which makes his role seem more prominent (Blue has three wrestling matches, which account for a significant portion of his screen time, but none of these are relevant to the plot).

It is very curious to note that Blue Demon was doubled by someone else in at least one scene (a locker-room confrontation with René Barrera and several other thugs, late in the movie). The close-ups make this pretty obvious: the *ersatz* Blue Demon is slimmer, taller, his nose is not as broad as the real Blue's, and his lips are much thinner and less

prominent. This proves that even though your protagonist is wearing a mask, it's not alright to

"just stick somebody else in there, no one will notice the difference."

While *Blue Demon--destructor de espías* had some minor science-fiction overtones, *Pasaporte a la muerte* (the title was re-used for an unrelated action film in 1987) combines espionage action with larger doses of fantastic plot elements, including a mad scientist, an android, and a plan to conquer and/or destroy the world. It's reasonably glossy but the special effects are fairly rudimentary and everything seems scaled-back or down-played rather than exploited to the fullest.

*Pasaporte a la muerte* was "partially" filmed in Panama, but this footage appears to be limited to a handful of second-unit shots of the Canal and Panama City (possibly even stock footage). Everything else occurs on a handful of Estudios América sets--a hotel, wrestling arena, mad scientist's lab, a few more--and the few exterior scenes were almost certainly done in Mexico as well.

As the film opens, agent Lafarge infiltrates a laboratory hidden underneath a mansion in Panama. Prof. Marcus, assisted by Prof. Bellini and a super-android (who has no

name, we'll just call him Android), is drilling into the earth's crust, with evil intentions. Android spots Lafarge and blasts him with a radiation beam from his fingers: the spy escapes, but the

radiation will affect his memory and eventually kill him. Back in Mexico, Lafarge tells his superiors as much of the tale as he can recall. Agents Blue Demon, Julio, and Nora go back to Panama with Lafarge to foil Marcus' scheme.



Real Blue Demon (left) and impostor (right)





Their cover will be a wrestling tour, with Julio as the impresario and Blue as star.

They're met in Panama by two people claiming to be fellow agents, David and Laura. One of them is presumably an impostor working for Marcus, but which one? To complicate matters, Lafarge is fading fast, Julio starts romancing singer Kitty, and Android takes a fancy to Laura. David is exposed as the double agent, but too late to do our heroes any good.

Meanwhile, various "natural" disasters like floods and earthquakes can be attributed to the drilling of Marcus,



who gives the world governments an ultimatum. Bellini protests and is killed when he attempts to flee, running into a deadly force-field that surrounds the mansion. Android wants to wipe out

humanity so his superior android "race" (which consists of...him) can rule the earth. Marcus protests and is zapped with Android's finger-ray. Android abducts Laura, planning to turn her into his android mate. Blue, Julio, and Nora follow Kitty (another agent of Marcus) to the mansion—Kitty dies when she runs into the force-field, but the heroes penetrate the lab and rescue Laura. Blue grabs a big radiation-beam device and blasts Android. Blue, Julio, Nora, and Laura escape. The "destructive gasses" released from the earth's "gas belt" are confined to the (sealed) lab, and Android perishes but the earth is saved.

The underground laboratory is a very large, albeit sparsely furnished set, with a handful of workers. Still, the idea that they'd create and dress such a big set is admirable. Android's finger-ray is used twice and is crude animation, but again, not the usual cop-out one

would expect. The "force-field" is, economically, invisible but it is used quite effectively—Android earlier said he'd set it up, but it comes as a surprise when Bellini smashes into it (there's a puff of smoke and he falls down, dead) and an even greater surprise when Kitty hits it, running full speed, and is killed. (Blue astutely falls down as if he's dead, and Marcus' henchmen turn off the force-field to retrieve Kitty's body, thus allowing our heroes access to the grounds.)



One effective aspect of *Pasaporte a la muerte* (a supremely non-relevant title) is the characterisation of Lafarge. Although his "radiation poisoning" is represented by bruises and discoloration (rather than flashier makeup),

Héctor Gómez does a very good job portraying the dying agent, who gets weaker and weaker but refuses to give up until he's contributed everything possible to solving the case.

The other outstanding performance comes from Eric del



Castillo as Android, who both looks and acts extremely menacing. The film has an clever villainous dynamic—Marcus is the boss, Android is his creation whose super-human abilities get the job done, and Bellini is the whining subsidiary scientist. Bellini balks at the destructiveness of the plan,

shoots a couple of henchmen and flees, vowing to notify the authorities (hint: it's never a good thing to inform the villain of your intentions to betray him) and is killed. Marcus keeps trying to assert his domination over the obviously more powerful Android, until he's finally bumped off for his obstinate cluelessness.

José Gálvez, Mario Orea (laying on a thick Italian

accent), Blue Demon, Carlos East, Maura Monti, Ana Luisa Peluffo, and Napoleón Deffit (a Venezuelan actor) are all fine but have relatively little to do. Raquel Bardisa was a Cuban singer/actress with a handful of screen credits; she's adequate in her role here.



Frankenstein's "Troglodita" character is a spoof of Cavernario Galindo (and his wild in-ring behaviour) and in fact Julio's date refers to him as a *cavernario* at one point. He loses a "mask vs. hair" match and has his head shaved (not really—he's wearing a crazy wig); this infuriates him, and he plots revenge against Blue, entering the ring after a subsequent match and attacking his masked rival, and then battling Blue later in a "legit" contest.

*Pasaporte a la muerte* is slick and fun, although it perhaps misses some opportunities and by using Blue Demon as part of an ensemble cast, may disappoint some of his fans.



## El Hijo de Alma Grande [The Son of Alma Grande]

(Prods. Fílmicas Agrasánchez--Belize International, Ltd., 1974) *Exec Prod*: Ernesto Fuentes; *Prod*: Rogelio Agrasánchez Linage [sic]; *Dir*: Tito Novaro; *Adapt*: Rogelio Agrasánchez L.; *Story*: Laura H. de Marchetti; *Photo*: Antonio Ruiz J.; *Music*: Gerald Carbuit; *Prod Mgr*: José Luis Urquieta, Rafael Rosales; *Film Ed*: Angel Camacho; *Sound*: Salvador Topete; *Tech Crew*: Damián Acosta, Armando Castellón, José Amezcuita, Pedro Moreno, Manuel García, Guillermo

Carrasco, Antonio Castañeda, Enrique Michel, Sergio López, Jorge Moreno; *Union*: STIC; Eastman Color

**CAST:** David

Lamar  
[Agrasánchez]  
(*Alma Grande*  
*hijo*), Blue Demon  
(*Blue Demon*), Ana  
Bertha Lepe  
(*Mirca*), Noé  
Murayama (*Noé*),  
Noelia Noel (*Kira*),  
Orlando Hernández  
(*Orlando*), José  
Luis Urquieta  
(*José*), Rafael  
Rosales, Rose Mary  
(*Sunny, guide?*),  
Luis Guevara



(*father of injured teen*), René Román, Guillermo Ayala, Bernabé Palma (*henchman*), Jorge Mena, Fredric Dauson

**NOTES:** This is no masterpiece, but it is a surprisingly decent little picture, made in Belize (which had just changed its name from "British Honduras" the previous year) and benefitting from some nice location shooting in that country. There are some sloppy spots (including several jarring continuity errors), the musical score is more often than not completely inappropriate to the action occurring on the screen (although the music itself is surprisingly good on its own), and the demise of villain Murayama is perhaps the most anti-climactic ever, but these do not seriously detract from the film's overall impact.

A few notes about the cast: David "Lamar" is really David Agrasánchez, one of the sons of producer Rogelio Agrasánchez. The chunky, baby-faced Lamar handles his acting chores competently, and does a decent job in his



fight scenes, but really doesn't look like a comic book hero (or even the "son" of one--*Alma Grande* was the Yaqui star of a long-running Western-adventure comic book series, and had been impersonated by Manuel López Ochoa in two feature

films in the Sixties). Ana Bertha Lepe hadn't been in a movie since 1968 (and would only make a couple more films in her career), but turns in a good performance, and looks exceptionally slim and attractive; Noelia Noel suffers in comparison, particularly since she is obviously older than her "husband" in the film. José Luis Urquieta, who plays "José," came up through the ranks--working

behind the camera in many capacities beginning as a teenager in the early Sixties, adding acting to his resumé in the '70s--and eventually became a director himself. Noé Murayama is OK in one of his usual villainous roles, and Orlando Hernández--a bodybuilder (billed as "Mister Venezuela") who facially somewhat resembles Philip Michael Thomas, of "Miami Vice" fame--is surprisingly adequate.

Blue Demon gets his share of the action, chiefly in the middle section of the film, although the sight of him running through the jungle in black boots, white pants, and no shirt makes you hope he had plenty of insect repellent. [In fact, Belize should be known as "the Land of Shirtless Men," because almost no males in the movie wear shirts!



Although Blue does wear several flashy ones when not in action...]

Tito Novaro, an actor since the 1940s, turned to directing in the late 1960s (he still worked in front of the cameras from time to time). While virtually all of his work came on

lower-case product, Novaro seems to have taken some care with his films, imbuing them with interesting touches, both narratively and technically. For instance, *El Hijo de Alma Grande* includes a number of attractive high-angle shots, some effective camera movement, match-shot editing, well-done "shock" closeups, and exudes a general air of competence from behind the camera. [Laura H. de Marchetti--almost certainly the director's wife--worked with Novaro on the scripts of many of his films.]

The film opens with a nearly 5-minute musical sequence (the credits play over part of it), showing a group of Belize natives dancing. There is hand-held camera work, use of a fish-eye lens, a repeated eye-motif (painted on the steel drums used by musicians, and on the foreheads of certain Belizeans),

images of people imprisoned in cages, shots of futuristically-garbed Mirca and Noé--all hinting about the plot that is about to unfold, creating a sense of anticipation in the viewer. This is followed by a



gruesome sequence in which Noé--revealed in a shock-zoom to have blank white pupils--uses two metal devices placed on his thumbs to gouge out the eyes of a prisoner: the eyeballs are dropped into a beaker of fluid and (presumably) transplanted into Noé's eye sockets later.

Aliens Mirca and Noé have set up shop near the Mayan ruins in Belize. They have enslaved a number of villagers



to serve them, and periodically transport earthlings back to their planet in a device that looks like a big blue trashcan. The aliens have to have eye transplants "every so often," and this is a way of providing a source of said transplants. José and Kira, on their honeymoon in Belize, hire Orlando to guide them around the Mayan ruins, despite rumors of "certain irregularities" having occurred there. All three are captured by the aliens.



In one amusing bit of exposition, José asks if the hostages are sent to the alien planet in "flying saucers." Noé replies, "Flying saucers are fantasies created by earthlings. We have methods that are simpler,

faster, and more effective." Mirca, meanwhile, tells Kira "You have beautiful eyes." [Uh-oh!]

José happens to be Blue Demon's brother, and when the newlyweds don't come back, the wrestler goes looking for them. He meets Alma Grande (why a Yaqui Indian, dressed in buckskins, would be living on a farm in Belize is not explained) but says he can handle this job alone.

[Before he leaves, Blue and Alma Grande rescue a teenager who's fallen into a ravine. The boy's grateful father insists the two men be his guests at a party, which leads to one of the first major continuity jumps in the picture. First, they're shown at a dinner, seated at a long table with various other people, as a group of children sing. Suddenly, there is a cut to them at a different party, at a much smaller table, in a different location (seaside), with a band playing and teenagers dancing. What th--?]

[A second continuity lapse occurs soon afterwards. Blue drives his VW van towards the Mayan zone, but has a flat tire. The very next shot shows him running frantically through the jungle--shirtless now--as if he knows exactly where he's going. Can't stop to change the tire, it's faster to...run?]

Blue arrives at the alien's camp in time to save Kira from the eye-gouging treatment. Kira escapes, but Blue is captured when

Noé zaps him with a device that looks like a flashlight but emits a flatulent buzzing sound (it's referred to as an "electronic whip").

Kira, in shock, is taken to a hospital. Alma Grande hypnotizes her and learns the story. They set out for the alien's hideout. In the meantime Mirca and Noé have packed up and moved out, lock, stock and transporter



trash-barrel (in an amusing scene, Orlando shorted out the transporter when they tried to send him back to their planet; Blue Demon and José look at each other and snicker). These scenes are quite ambitious, as a fairly large number of extras makes a trek across the countryside, with the transporter on a wagon pulled by slaves; Mirca is seated on a sedan chair also carried by slaves, and she holds an umbrella over her head, occasionally fanning herself in the tropical heat. Eventually, Alma Grande and Kira catch up with the group; Blue Demon, Orlando, José, Kira, and the enslaved villagers are all freed. The transporter falls off its wagon and breaks, but Alma Grande is captured by Mirca and Noé.

However, Mirca goes blind, and she and Alma Grande are left behind by Noé. Alma Grande tries to help Mirca, but she eventually dies



(first apologizing for her evil actions; when she asks Alma Grande why he's helping her, he says "Doing good in exchange for evil cleanses the soul"). Alma Grande, Orlando, and Blue

Demon confront Noé in a cavern. He says "You'll never take me alive," and presses a button on his belt. He disappears. [That's it? He's dead?]

[There is another bizarre continuity error in this section. Blue, Orlando, Kira and the freed slaves head back towards civilisation. When Alma Grande doesn't join them, Blue--by himself--leaves to find him. However, a short time later, there is a cut to Blue and Orlando dashing through the jungle together. I guess Orlando belatedly decided to join him, but this is very clumsily done.]

The film concludes with another beach party. Blue says he wouldn't have believed in extraterrestrials if he hadn't been there himself, and Alma Grande gives him some mumbo jumbo about the human mind can confuse people, or something. Orlando plays a joke in very bad taste, popping up with an eyeball painted on his forehead, causing Kira to scream in terror. Ha ha, that guy!

*El Hijo de Alma Grande* is imaginative (if not terribly original, at least its basic premise) and knows its limitations, particularly in the area of



special effects. Some viewers may be disappointed in the emphasis on Alma Grande's heroics (he is a martial artist, rides a horse, treats wounds with plants, hypnotises people,

says wise things) at the expense of Blue Demon, but the film is titled *El Hijo de Alma Grande*, after all.

In fact, Blue Demon could have easily been replaced with a "civilian" character--there are no wrestling sequences in the movie, not even any references to his wrestling career. Additionally--although this is frequently seen in *lucha libre* films--Blue engages in several fights with henchmen here, but takes forever to finish them off. They just keep popping up, again and again, despite his punches, kicks, and so on. In one scene, Blue finally defeats two men who've attacked him, only to have Noé show up and use his "electronic whip" to knock out the masked superhero. This is not to say Blue is ineffectual or superfluous to the film as a whole--he's still a stalwart hero--but he's not the protagonist, either.

*El Hijo de Alma Grande* is really quite well-done and entertaining.



## BELATED OBITUARIES

[While doing research for this issue of *MFB*, I belatedly learned of the passing of several Mexican cinema performers. So, better late than never, here are obituaries.]

### Carlos Monden

Carlos Monden, a fixture in Mexican cinema and television for 5 decades, died of heart failure in a Mexico City hospital on 22 April 2011. He had been suffering from kidney problems. Monden was born in Chile in June 1937, but moved to Mexico while young (eventually becoming a citizen) and began working professionally as an actor in the mid-Sixties.



Monden's films include

*Pasaporte a la muerte*, *La carrera del millón*, *Supervivientes de los Andes*, *El rey del masaje*, and *La asesinadita*. He made many television appearances as well, including a recurring role on the popular '80s comedy "Cachún Cachún ra ra!" His last telenovela appearance was in 2007.

Monden and actress Irán Eory were romantically involved from the mid-1980s until her death in 2002, although they never married. He had two children from a previous marriage to Ingrid Grupe de Monden.

### José Díaz "Joselo"

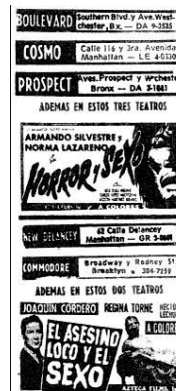
Comic actor José Manuel Díaz Márquez, known professionally as "Joselo," died in Caracas on 5 January 2013; he was 76 years old. Díaz, born in the Venezuelan state of Aragua in September 1936, first became popular on radio in his homeland in 1960. He later moved to television, hosting "El Show de Joselo" on various

networks from 1964 through 1993. Joselo worked frequently with Napoleón Deffit.

Joselo appeared in a number of films in the Sixties, including several directed in Venezuela by René Cardona Jr. (presumably Cardona Jr. at the time wasn't yet in the directors' union in Mexico)—*El raspado* and *Yo, el gobernador*—then co-starred with Capulina in *Operación carambola*, with Evita in *Un extraño en la casa* (both shot in Mexico), and with Amador Bendayán in *El reportero* (a Venezuelan-Mexican co-production). He also worked in several Venezuelan movies in the 1970s.



Joselo was married to actress Mary Soliani. His older brother, Simón Díaz, was a popular singer. In later years, Joselo was a vocal supporter of Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez.



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