

THE MEXICAN FILM BULLETIN

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 1

WE'RE BACK...

For our 22nd year of *The Mexican Film Bulletin*. As mentioned in our last issue, beginning with Volume 22 *MFB* is now a quarterly publication, with issues appearing in March, June, September, and December.

Welcome back to our loyal readers and greetings to any newcomers to *The Mexican Film Bulletin*, which covers Mexican cinema, past and present.



OBITUARIES

Unfortunately, a lot of obituaries this issue. Although it's preferable to recognise the contributions of those who participated in the *cine nacional* which they're still alive to appreciate it, this isn't always feasible. However, at least we can acknowledge them posthumously.



ALBERTO "CABALLO" ROJAS



Comic actor Alberto "El Caballo" Rojas died at the age of 72 on 21 February 2016; he had been suffering from bladder cancer since last year. Rojas became immensely popular in the 1980s and 1990s for his roles in picaresque *sexy-comedies*. He also directed a number of films and was a popular stage performer, working in live venues until his illness was diagnosed in 2015.

Alberto Rojas González was born in Monterrey in March 1944. He moved to Mexico City in 1963 and studied acting at the Instituto de Bellas Artes. The slender, horse-faced comedian made his screen debut in 1968 in *Santo en el tesoro de Drácula*—as Santo's comic relief sidekick—but his film credits over the next

decade were relatively sparse. However, the 1980s saw Rojas progress from supporting roles, often as effeminate characters, to starring parts in popular late-decade comedies such as *Pancho el Sancho*, *Un macho en el hotel*, *El garañón*, and *Dos nacos en el planeta de las mujeres*, as well as *videohomes*. Rojas directed more than a dozen feature films and *videohomes*. He also appeared on television, as well as continuing his stage work.

Rojas is survived by his wife of more than 40 years, actress Lucero Reynoso, and four children, 3 daughters and a son.



MARÍA LUISA ALCALÁ

Actress María Luisa Alcalá passed away on 21 February 2016 in Mexico City of undisclosed reasons; she was 72 years old. Alcalá was born in March 1943 in Mexico City. Although some sources indicate she appeared as a child in *Los tres huastecos* (1948), Alcalá's professional career dates from the late 1960s.

Despite appearances in television programs such as "El Chavo del 8" and "Cachún cachún ra ra!" Alcalá achieved her greatest fame as the acerbic servant of Dr. Cándido Pérez (Jorge Ortiz de Pinedo) in the "Cándido Pérez" TV series. She later worked in *telenovelas*, although her last regular role was in 2005.



Alcalá had roles in a number of theatrical films, including *El Rey*, *Relámpago*, *Un paso al más acá*, two "Cándido Pérez" feature films, and *Barroco*. [Note: although IMDB erroneously (?) lists Alcalá as co-director on three films, she is not credited on-screen.]

María Luisa Alcalá is survived by two children and two grandchildren.



CARLOS CÁMARA

Carlos Cámara, well-known for his *telenovela* work, died in Mexico City on 24 February 2016; the cause of death was listed as a heart attack. Carlos Cámara Lozano was born in the Dominican Republic in January 1934: his mother was Spanish and his father was from the USA, but

Cámara spent most of his youth in Venezuela, where his mother was well-known for helping establish the



radionovela industry. In the late 1960s, Julio Alemán appeared in a Venezuelan *telenovela* with Cámara's then-wife Elisa Parejo, and convinced Cámara to come to Mexico to work as an actor.

Cámara gained fame as a villain in *telenovelas* such as the famous "Los ricos también lloran" (1979) and "Cuna de lobos" (1986); his most recent

television work was also in that format, on "Hasta que el dinero nos separe" in 2010. His career in films included roles in *Fallaste corazón*, *Supervivientes de los Andes* (aka *Survive!*), *La guerra santa*, and *La leyenda de Rodrigo*.

Carlos Cámara is survived by his widow and by three children from his marriage to Elisa Parejo (all now actors themselves) and a daughter from his second marriage.



SILVANA PAMPANINI

Italian actress Silvana Pampanini died on 6 January 2016; she was 90 years of age.



Pampanini, born in Rome in September 1925, entered the film industry in 1946. She became an international

sex symbol and worked not only in Italy but also in numerous foreign venues and co-productions with countries including Mexico, Spain, France, West Germany, Egypt and Argentina.

Pampanini's Mexican films were *Sed de amor*, *Napoleoncito*, and *3,000 kilómetros de amor*.

The actress was never married and had no children.



JUAN CARLOS SERRÁN

Argentine-born actor Juan Carlos Serrán, who worked in Mexican television and cinema from the 1980s until the 2010s, died in Mexico City on 2 February 2016.

Juan Carlos Gómez Giuntini was born in Argentina in January 1954, but relocated to Mexico in the early 1980s. He appeared in more than 50

telenovelas and television series over the next three decades, and also had roles in a number of theatrical films



and *videohomes*, including *Fray Bartolomé de las Casas*, *Zurdo*, *La segunda noche*, and the USA-UK coproduction *Fast Food Nation*.



DUNIA ZALDÍVAR

Veteran actress Dunia Zaldívar (sometimes spelled Saldívar), died of emphysema on 3 February 2016.

Zaldívar, born in Guadalajara in November 1942, began appearing in films and on television in the 1960s.

Zaldívar was nominated for a Best Supporting Actress Ariel in 1986 for *Los motivos de Luz*, losing to Ana Ofelia Murguía (for the same movie), but two years later won the award for

Nocturno amor que te vas. Her other films included *El jardín de la tía Isabel*, *Los destrampados*, and *Amores perros*.



GUILLERMO AGUILAR



Actor Guillermo Aguilar died on 22 January 2016; he had been hospitalised for several weeks, and passed away as a result of pneumonia.

Although he worked in films and on television, he was known as the "Prince of the Fantastic Theatre" for his stage work. Aguilar was 85 years of age, and had retired from acting in 2005 for health reasons. (More recent credits on his IMDB listing are

actually for another actor with the same name.)

Aguilar's film and TV credits date back to the 1960s. Among the films in which he appeared: *Las bestias jóvenes*, *Cristo te ama*, *La mafia amarilla*, and *Modelo antiguo*. His *telenovelas* included "El Maleficio," and "El privilegio de amar." Aguilar is survived by his brother, Gustavo Kubli Ramírez.



CARMEN MALDONADO "PETRITA"

Actress Carmen Maldonado, nicknamed "Petrita," died on 23 February 2016 of complications from diabetes; she was 52 years old.

Maldonado, married to producer Gilberto Briones, spent much of her career working on the stage in the Monterrey region of northern Mexico. She did make several film appearances,



including *El baile* and *Inspiración*, both shot in the Monterrey area.



AMELIA BENCE



Amelia Bence, an Argentine actress whose career spanned 9 decades, died on 8 February 2016 in Buenos Aires; she was 101 years old. Bence, whose real name was María Batviniki, was born in Argentina in November 1914. She began acting as a child, and made her screen debut in Argentina in 1933, but returned to the stage. Later in the decade she tried the cinema once more, becoming one of the more popular actresses of the 1940s. Bence married actor Alberto Closas in 1950 (they divorced in 1953—she married two more times). She appeared in the early '50s Mexican features *Siete mujeres* and *Las tres Elenas*, but soon returned to her homeland and resumed her acting career there.



GEORGE KENNEDY

Actor George Kennedy died on 28 February 2016 at the age of 91. He had been suffering from lung cancer. Kennedy was born in New York City in February 1925



and entered show business as a child, but served in the U.S. military from World War II through the late 1950s, when he retired for physical reasons. He began acting in the 1960s in films and on television, and continued working well into the 2010s.

His films included *Cool Hand Luke*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *Airport*

(and 3 sequels) and three “Naked Gun” movies. Kennedy’s only Mexican cinema work came on the 1988 Mexican-Spanish co-production *Escuadrón Counterforce* (just *Counterforce* in its English-language release), with Jorge Rivero, Isaac Hayes, Louis Jourdan, Hugo Stiglitz, and Susana Dosamantes.



CINEMA-RELATED COMICS & FOTONOVELAS PART 1: CELEBRITY TITLES

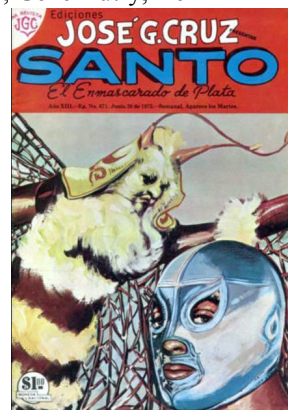
Previous articles in *The Mexican Film Bulletin* have covered cinematic adaptations of Mexican comic books, and Mexican comic book adaptations of individual films (the “Su Película Favorita” series—see *The Mexican Film Bulletin* 17/3 May-June 2011). There are at least two other film-related types of Mexican *historietas* (“comic books”—which category, for our purposes, includes *fotonovelas*): comic books “starring” famous actors and other celebrities,

and *fotonovelas* utilising film actors. The first type of publication will be discussed here, and a future issue of *MFB* will cover the *fotonovela* phenomenon.

[There is a fine line between comics about a fictional character from cinema who is completely associated with a particular performer—for example, La India María (María Elena Velasco)—and original comics about fictional characters that are still related to a specific actor, c.f. “Anibal 5” (Jorge Rivero) or “La Llanera Vengadora” (Flor Silvestre).]

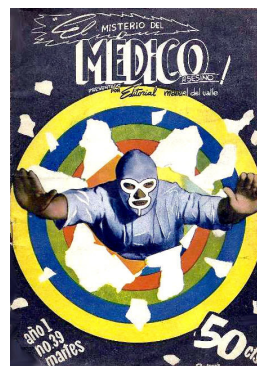
In the USA, comic books based on an actual person (usually a film star) began to appear in the mid-late 1940s. Fawcett & others published numerous Western comics “starring” Hopalong Cassidy (identified as being played by William Boyd—there were also “Bill Boyd” comics), Bob Steele, Andy Devine, Gabby Hayes, Gene Autry, Ken Maynard, Lash Larue, Rocky Lane, Smiley Burnette, Tex Ritter, Tom Mix, and Rod Cameron, among others. Comic actors such as Jerry Lewis (originally “The Adventures of Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis”), Bob Hope, the Three Stooges, Abbott and Costello, Pinky Lee, and Milton Berle were also the subject of comic books.

Mexican comic books began to be published in the 1930s, but single-character titles didn’t appear until the 1950s. One of the earliest was the “Santo” comic from José G. Cruz, which became immensely popular and ran (albeit with reprinted stories in its final years) until the late 1970s (and was reprinted throughout Latin America into the mid-’80s). Although the comic (which utilised the *fotomontaje* process rather than drawn artwork) was based on an actual professional wrestler, it



can be argued that Cruz’s creation was almost entirely original in theme and content: at the time, El Santo was a *rudo* (bad-guy wrestler) in the ring, but the comic portrayed him as a benevolent superhero, which in turn influenced Santo’s later film (and ring) persona.

The success of El Santo’s magazine inspired a number of other comics based on *lucha libre* personalities: Black



Shadow and El Médico Asesino in the early '50s, Blue Demon in the '50-60s (at least 4 different series), Huracán Ramírez in the '70s, among others. Most of these were produced in the *fotomontaje* style, but in the '70s and beyond a number of drawn-art *lucha* comics appeared, including series starring El Hijo del Santo, Tinieblas, and others. While most of these *luchadores* made screen appearances, their comic books often pre-dated their film fame and instead capitalised on their popularity as sports

figures (even though the comic book stories were generally superhero/crime-oriented).



One of the earliest non-lucha celebrity comics was also the product of the José G. Cruz publishing house, "Clavillazo." This *historieta* began publication in 1952, when Antonio Espino "Clavillazo" was just beginning his screen career (although he'd been a popular stage performer for about a decade) and does not seem to have been particularly successful.

María Félix was the protagonist of "La vida deslumbrante de María Félix," which lasted for about 100 issues between 1956-58. Ediciones Ortega Colunga published this *fotocomic*, which pasted photos of the glamorous star into scenes to tell fictional stories, although she was still playing herself, a



famous actress. For instance, issue 99 begins a story featuring Félix and her husband Agustín Lara on their honeymoon in Acapulco (true), where an insane yachtsman falls in love with Félix and schemes to murder Lara! (fiction)

Although the interior stories were not biographical, the cover artwork (paintings by Roger López) often reflected Félix's real life and films, including numerous images of Félix with her husband Jorge Negrete (several covers showed Negrete alone, omitting Félix entirely!).

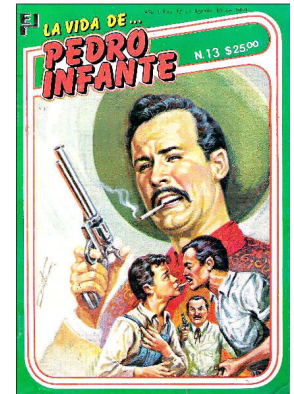


The success of the María Félix title prompted Ortega Colunga to issue "La vida y los amores de Pedro Infante," which began in April 1957, shortly after the star's death in an airplane crash. The same publisher had previously used Infante's photos for their *fotonovela*

"Confesiones de un chofer" (1956). Now they followed the María Félix path: colour portraits (by Pascual Gómez and Antonio Gutiérrez) on the cover (the same artwork was reproduced on the back cover but without printing, so readers could paste this on their bedroom walls), with interior *fotomontaje* stories placing Pedro Infante in dramatic—but fictional—situations.



Although María Félix does not seem to have reappeared in comic books in later years (probably, since she was still alive, she refused to grant permission), Pedro Infante's name and likeness continued after the initial 80-issue run of "Vida y amores." EDAR put out "El gran amor de Pedro Infante" in the late Fifties, then Ortega Colunga (and several other companies) published over 100 issues of "Los amores íntimos de Pedro Infante" in the mid-60s. "La vida de Pedro Infante" (Ejea) was a 1980s drawn-art comic book which, for a change, apparently attempted to depict Infante's biography (as opposed to fictional stories in which he appears) in comic book format; close to 200 issues were printed.



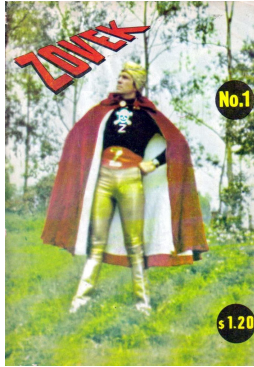
In July 1987, film director Ismael Rodríguez (who received story credit, along with Jorge Rodríguez Mas) collaborated with artist Sixto Valencia to produce "El Jorobado: la película que no hizo Pedro Infante," a comic which utilised Infante to introduce stories inspired by figures in a wax museum.

The Sixties and early Seventies saw the issuance of a large number of celebrity comics, in both drawn and *fotocomic* formats. On the dramatic side, titles included "La vida de Agustín Lara" (EDAR, 1964-67), "Vida y muerte de Javier Solís" (1966—oddly, some of the covers of this comic were drawn, others used actual photos of Solís, and some used posed photos of a lookalike model), and "La Tigresa" (José G. Cruz comic "starring" Irma Serrano, who later adopted the nickname of "La Tigresa" based on the comic). Editorial Paolgra published two series—"Doña Sara la Mera Mera" and "Aventuras de la Mera Mera"—featuring actress Sara García as the "host" of various



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stories (including adaptations of the Sixties “Chucho el Roto” series with Manuel López Ochoa). When the Beatles became internationally popular in the mid-‘60s, an enterprising Mexican publisher came out with “Cine Secretos,” which depicted the Beatles in *fotocomic* format (their adventures lasted 24 issues)! [Bruce Lee had his own Mexican comic book series in the Seventies.] Escape artist and (briefly) film star Zovek was also the star of two publications in 1970: a drawn comic book from Editorial



Rudisa and a *fotocomic* issued by Baillet y Asociados.

A significant number of comics utilised film and television comedians as protagonists. “La India María” began publication in October 1970, as another José G. Cruz *fotocomic*. “Aventuras de Viruta y Capulina” (a drawn comic) started in 1960 but—like “The Adventures of Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis”—changed its

title when the comedy team broke up. Capulina’s comic book adventures ran well into the ‘90s, and even diversified: there was “Foto Capulina” in the mid-70s, “Aventuras de Capulinita” (a mini-comic with over 1,000 issues!), and at least one spin-off title featuring Capulina’s “Tío Porfirio.”

Other humour comics from the ‘60s through the ‘80s chronicled the adventures of Los Polivoces, Pompín y Nacho, Manolín y Shilinsky, clown Cepillín, “La tremenda corte de Trespatines” (Trespatines was a famous Cuban comedian popular throughout Latin America, but the comic was published by Mexican company Promotora “K,” the home of Kalimán), “El Águila Descalza” (Alfonso Arau), “Simplemente Natacho” (Héctor

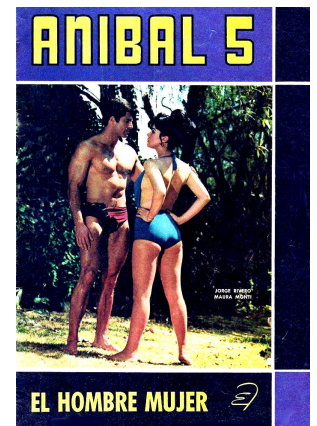
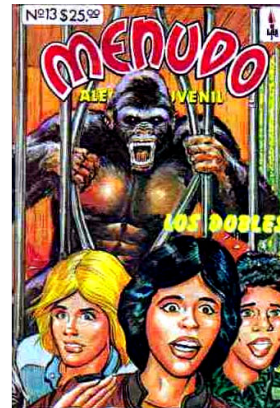
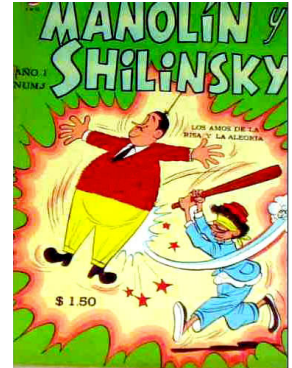
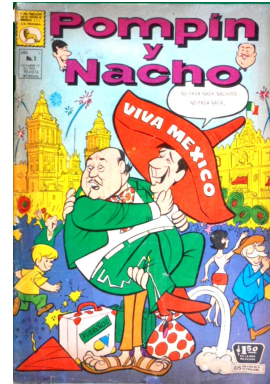
Lechuga), “Gumersinda” (Susana Cabrera), Luis Manuel Pelayo, Chabelo, Beto el Boticario and various creations of Roberto Gómez Bolaños (“El Chavo del 8,” “El Chapulín Colorado”). Oddly enough, there do not seem to have been any comics bearing the likenesses of Germán Valdés “Tin Tan,” Adalberto Martínez “Resortes” (aside from comic book adaptations of his films,



such as the “Su película favorita” version of *Carnaval en mi barrio* and *La Chamaca*) or Mario Moreno “Cantinflas”

(other than comic adaptations of his animated series “Cantinflas Show”).

In the 1980s and beyond, comic books featuring musical groups as the protagonists in fictional stories became popular: Bronco, Los Parchis, La Banda Timbiriche, Menudo, and even Three Souls in My Mind were “honoured” in this way. Comic actor Héctor Suárez’s various TV characters could be seen in the comic “No Hay! No Hay!” and Rosa Gloria Chagoyán’s most famous role was immortalised in “Lola la trailera” comics.





Alberto "El Caballo" Rojas Films



Oye, Salomé! [Listen, Salomé!] (CONACINE, 1978) *Dir:* Miguel M. Delgado; *Scr:* Juan Prosper; *Photo:* Rosalío Solano; *Music:* Sergio Guerrero; *Prod Mgr:* Antonio H. Rodríguez; *Prod Chief:* Enrique Morfin; *Asst Dir:* Mario Cisneros; *Film Ed:* Carlos Savage; *Art Dir:* Javier Rodríguez; *Decor:* Carlos Grandjean; *Camera Op:* Leonardo Sánchez; *Lighting:* Horacio Calvillo; *Makeup:* Olga Ruiseco; *Sound Op:* Cruz Carrasco; *Re-rec:* Jesús González Gancy; *Union:* STPC

Cast: Sasha Montenegro (*Guadalupe aka Salomé*), Héctor Suárez (*Raúl*), Eduardo de la Peña "Lalo el Mimo" (*Lautaro Leonardo Pituco Boracelli aka El Che*), Benny Ibarra (*Adolfo*), Alberto Rojas "El Caballo" (*Licenciado*), Verónica (*Verónica*), Carlos Riquelme (*don Eolio*), Yolanda Rigel (*Yolanda*), Víctor Alcocer (*priest*), Juan Calderón (*TV host*), César Sobrevals (*car owner*), Manuel Ibáñez (*Tecolote*), Arturo Cobo (*mechanic*), Francisco Sañudo (*cabaret owner*), León Singer, Angelines Fernández (*mother of Guadalupe*), Cecilia Leger (*woman at concert*), Rubén Márquez (*Godínez*), Jorge Zamora (*man in cabaret*), Leonardo Trebole (*Licenciado's bodyguard*), Armando Duarte (*bouncer*), Fernando Pinkus (*bartender*), Gerardo Zepeda and José Luis Avendaño (*men in truck*), Jorge Victoria (*actor in "Las camas gemelas" trailer*), Sonora Veracruz, Los Dandys, Mariachi México 70 con Pepe López, Pepe Arévalo y sus mulatos, Guillermo Álvarez Bianchi (*Spanish cantinero*), Federico González (*prisoner*), Javier Díaz, Samia Farah, Margarita Isabel, Olga Manzoli, Sergio Molina, Martha Alicia Rodríguez, Martha Covarrubias

Notes: this is not really a *sexy-comedy*, and contains little nudity (Sasha Montenegro appears in a transparent

negligee in one scene, and an unidentified actress exposes her breasts in a fake movie trailer). It's a more refined and sedate comedy, as one might expect from a government production company and from a director and a crew of technicians whose careers (in many cases) date back to the 1930s and 1940s. The Churubusco studios do provide a bit of production gloss, including a large "exterior" set (the outside of the cabaret) where a fair amount of the movie's action occurs.

During this period of her career, Sasha Montenegro was not exactly going "straight"--most of her roles were variations on her sexy screen persona regardless--but she did appear in somewhat more "respectable" movies like *La vida difícil de una mujer fácil*, *Con el cuerpo prestado*, and *La golfa del barrio*, where she got to "act," was the primary star, and kept her clothes on more than usual. *Oye, Salomé!* is one such picture: it's still reasonably amusing and well-cast, although a bit repetitive and the



pace is slowed down by the inclusion of too many musical numbers.

Guadalupe is a refined music student who plays the flute in a classical quartet with her fiancé Adolfo and two other young women. Educated in a convent school, Guadalupe is the pride of her

parents and never does anything that could be construed as "incorrect." Her favorite expression--when Adolfo tries to sneak a kiss, for example--is "God sees us everywhere." What Guadalupe doesn't know is that each night, after she falls asleep, her second personality takes over. "Salomé" is a habitué of the "La Salsera" cabaret, where she is pursued by Argentine pimp "El Che," mechanic Raúl, and the *Licenciado*, a politician. Salomé doesn't succumb to any of their approaches, giving each person a different (melodramatic) story about herself. She does like Raúl, but he's too poor for her to think of having a future with him.

One night, El Che and Salomé win a salsa dance

contest. The next day, Guadalupe is puzzled to find the trophy in her bedroom. Later, Adolfo, Guadalupe, and her parents watch a TV commercial featuring music Adolfo composed;

the following program contains footage from the dance contest, and Adolfo sees Salomé! Guadalupe "confesses" Salomé is her black-sheep sister and warns him never to



discuss this with her parents. That night at the cabaret, Adolfo shows up to take Salomé back to her family, but is knocked out and tossed in the street. Raúl is also evicted by the bouncers; he and Adolfo become friends, since Raúl loves Salomé and Adolfo is engaged to her "sister," Guadalupe. Salomé is practically abducted by the Licenciado and taken to his "love nest," but she tricks him into doing a strip-tease for her, then tosses his clothes out the window and departs.



Adolfo breaks up with Guadalupe ("find yourself another clarinet") because he has fallen in love with Salomé. He asks

Guadalupe's father for permission to marry his "other" daughter, which confuses the older man (and Guadalupe's mother, overhearing, hits her husband, believing he has an illegitimate daughter somewhere). But Salomé turns down Adolfo's proposal, admitting she loves Raúl. Adolfo tells Raúl and at the film's end, Raúl and Salomé embrace (in romantic slo-mo) outside the cabaret. However, a few seconds later, we see Guadalupe reconcile with Adolfo, so apparently she is going to keep her dual identity alive.

Oye, Salomé! contains several very amusing bits. In one sequence, Adolfo takes Guadalupe to the movies (to see "The Return of the Ten Commandments"); the couple is accompanied by Guadalupe's parents, of course. During the show, a trailer for a (fictitious) film entitled "Las camas gemelas" (The Twin Beds) is shown--a man and a woman have a violent argument, her blouse is ripped off exposing her chest, then the couple embraces roughly, as the announcer says things like "Don't let your whole family miss it!" and "Appropriate for all audiences!" Guadalupe's father stalks out in disgust, taking the others with him.

A running gag throughout the film are scenes of Guadalupe confessing to the local priest. She says she dreams she's a bargirl, but really wants to be a nun. No, the priest says, you don't have a religious vocation--"All of God's servants are ugly." As she departs, the priest watches her rump undulate and says "she reminds me of Santa Bárbara. Santa from the front, and *bárbara* from behind!"

Adolfo's TV commercial is also funny, featuring a goofy song and an odd-looking actress eating a chocolate bar. Guadalupe and her parents praise him effusively, and Adolfo tells them to leave the television on because "they're going to show my commercial again later."

The cast of *Oye, Salomé!* is very strong, with a nice performance from Montenegro in essentially a dual role, and funny turns from Lalo el Mimo, Benny Ibarra, Carlos

Riquelme, and Víctor Alcocer. Alberto Rojas and Héctor Suárez are adequate, but neither is at the top of their game --Rojas plays it almost straight (although he does get to camp it up during his strip-tease scene), and Suárez is too serious and maudlin. Flaco Ibáñez, as El Che's "deaf-mute" sidekick, doesn't have any dialogue until the end of the movie. "Why didn't you tell me [you could speak]?" El Che asks. "You never asked me!" is the reply.

Unfortunately, the picture is overloaded with musical numbers that all seem to play out too long, and as a result the pacing is way off. If not for this, the film would be much more entertaining than it is, but even so it's not bad at all.



Piernas cruzadas [Crossed Legs] (Prods.

Internacionales de América-Blau Films, 1982)* *Exec*

Prod: Luis Bekris;
Dir: Rafael Villaseñor Kuri; *Scr:* Jorge Patiño; *Photo:* Javier Cruz; *Music:* Gregorio García Segura; *Prod Mgr:* Mario V. Chiu; *Prod Co-ord:* Anna Roth; *Asst Dir:* Alejandro R. Todd; *Film Ed:* Max Sánchez; *Art Dir:* José Méndez; *Camera Op:* José Luis Lemus; *Camera Asst:* Javier Cruz Osorio; *Makeup:* María Eugenia Luna; *Sound Engin:* Víctor



Rojo; *Re-rec:* Ricardo Saldívar; *Union:* STIC

*Mexican-Spanish coproduction

Cast: Julissa (*Prudencia*), Lalo de la Peña "El Mimo" (*Lorenzo de la Mota*), María José Cantudo (*Lucero Rioja*; *Rosario "Chayo" de la Mota*), Alfredo Landa (*Jeremías*), Alberto Rojas "El Caballo" (*Clemente Madrazo*), Hilda Aguirre (*psychiatrist*), Carmen Salinas (*singer*), Rafael Inclán (*Pepe Artiga*), Pedro Weber "Chatanooga" (*Tato*), Freddy Fernández "El Pichi" (*impresario*), Mario Zebadua "Colocho" (*police inspector*), Armando Soto la Marina "El Chicote" (*butler*), Charly Valentino (*Tino*), Jorge Fegan (?*Rev. Wilson*), Arturo Cobo (*hotel desk clerk*), Malú Reyes (*maid*), Jeanette Mass (*herself*), Carlos Agost (*Sr. Madrazo*), Eugenia Avendano (?*Sra. Madrazo*), Gerardo Zepeda "Chiquilín" (*police agent*), Víctor Alcocer (*Dr. Rufino*), Roberto Schlosser (*Manolo*), Florencio Castellot (*third bank robber*), Irma Porter, José Luis Rojas, Rafael Fernández "El Naco," Laura Wagner, Roberto Moreno, Víctor Jordán

Notes: this "sexy comedy" has an outstanding cast (although some good performers are wasted) and a tried-and-true premise (mistaken identity), but is poorly-paced until the decent final third of the film, which even then

isn't *that* amusing. Curiously, although the plot makes a particular point of María José Cantudo's character being compelled to "strip" during her act, she never does (although she wears some skimpy costumes). Aside from an exotic "dance" by Jeanette Mass (basically she walks around and takes off her clothes, making no effort to even move rhythmically) and a split-second shot of Malú Reyes as she spills out of her costume, the only nudity--and shocking it is!--is a brief sequence of full frontal nudity by Julissa, before she leaps in bed with Lalo el Mimo. The filmmakers thought this was so good that they immediately replay it, superimposed over shots of Julissa's bare behind as she wrestles with her onscreen husband. This 30 seconds does not a good movie make, however.

Prudencia, the second wife of wealthy businessman Lorenzo, is the driving force behind a women's group opposed to "immorality" in all forms. Prudencia takes this to heart at home, wearing a chastity belt to bed, and repressing her attractive step-daughter Chayo. Chayo has taken to ripping open her blouse in public in protest. When her stepmother-approved boyfriend Clemente comes over, the couple is only allowed to watch cartoons on TV (even the childrens' show "Los Parchis" is considered "too strong!"), monitored on closed-circuit by the superannuated butler.



Meanwhile, in Spain, Jeremías is managing the career of his goddaughter Lucero, a dancer and singer. She refuses to strip, which prevents her from becoming a success. Jeremías tells Lucero she's been hired to perform in Mexico (although he and two friends actually rob a bank to obtain money for the trip); Lucero leaves her boyfriend, flamenco singer Pepe, behind in Spain, but says she'll send for him. In Mexico, Jeremías gets Lucero a contract at a nightclub, but once again she's informed she'll have to strip as part of her act.

Chayo flees from her home, and arranges to meet Clemente at the Holiday Inn in the Zona Rosa. This is coincidentally the same hotel where Lucero and Jeremías are staying, and Chayo is given the key to their room (the two Spaniards are out). Clemente is waylaid and tortured by the police until he reveals where he was supposed to meet Chayo; however, it is Lucero who is snatched up by the cops and "returned" to her "home." Similarly, Chayo is

mistaken by Jeremías for his goddaughter, and dragged to the nightclub to perform.

Chayo, dressed in an abbreviated outfit, sings a sultry song and (despite not stripping) is a huge success. Lucero violently protests that she isn't Chayo, but her family thinks she's gone insane. However, both women discover positive aspects of their forced identity-switch: Chayo feels liberated and loves to perform, while Lucero falls in love with Clemente and is happy in her luxurious surroundings. (Also, Prudencia discards her stern manner and even resumes--in fact, demands--sexual relations with her husband Lorenzo)

Pepe, reading the newspapers back in Spain, learns of the success of "Lucero" in Mexico, and feels betrayed. He decides to avenge his honor, and crosses the ocean to find his wayward sweetheart. He confronts Chayo at the theatre and doesn't believe her story (one good line--she insists she's "Chayo de la Mota," and Pepe says, "so you've even tried the local drugs, eh?" *Mota* is slang for marijuana). They are all arrested by the police after Pepe shoots up her dressing room, and Chayo reveals her real identity. Lucero is at the church being married to Clemente, but the ceremony is disrupted by the arrival of Chayo and the others. Everything is explained, and all is forgiven. Clemente will marry Lucero, and Chayo will continue to sing and dance. Pepe is mollified by becoming the partner of Jeremías in a chain of *posole* restaurants.

Since this was a Spanish-Mexican coproduction, it's a little odd to see how outrageously caricatured the Spanish characters are ("real" Spaniards in the cast include Cantudo, Landa, Carlos Agosti--who plays a Mexican, though--and Florencio Castellot, a "professional Spaniard" in Mexican cinema

since the early 1940s; Mexican Rafael Inclán does a funny bit as the overly-melodramatic Pepe), in terms of their speech, dress, mannerisms, and attitudes. This may be attributed to the fact that the crew was



almost entirely Mexican, with the exception of composer Gregorio García Segura (who gets in a little joke of his own, using variations on "La Cucaracha" as the musical leitmotif for Chayo's character). Still, the Spaniards aren't negatively stereotyped--there are no beret-wearing *gachupín* storekeepers in Mexico depicted here--and thus it's all in good fun, I suppose. (Clearly, if the shoe had been on other foot, the Mexican characters would probably have been stereotyped *charros* or *nortños*)

The cast, as mentioned earlier, is very good, although Hilda Aguirre (one-scene cameo), Carmen Salinas (one song and some banter in a theatre, absolutely extraneous to the plot and thus pure padding), Víctor Alcocer, and Arturo Cobo don't have much to do. A fairly slim Charly Valentino has a stereotyped gay role; El Chicote (very old

by this time) is underused as the de la Mota butler, forced to speak French by his pretentious employers.

Lalo el Mimo and Alberto Rojas do their usual good jobs, both a bit more subdued than usual (because of their supporting roles), while Julissa looks great and handles her schizophrenic part (from prude to sensual woman) well. Alfredo Landa is an amusing, capable performer who had worked in Mexico several times before; he has kind of a beagle-face and is a bit miscast as the scheming uncle, but is still amusing. María José Cantudo is quite attractive and her two different characters each seem unique and real, although I suspect her Mexican dialogue may have been dubbed (unless she's a much better actress and linguist than I know).

The production values are adequate, but Villaseñor Kuri's direction--perhaps hampered by Patiño's script--takes a long time to build up any pace or comic rhythm. For example, during the first half or two-thirds of the movie there is constant cross-cutting between Chayo and Lucero, to set up the rest of the story. However, the shifts between scenes are done with little or no rhyme or reason; often, one scene will be cut short and give way to another scene, then the second scene will flounder around for a while before yielding to the first character's story once more. This type of cross-cutting is frequently done with some sort of "bridge," symmetry, or link between the two scenes--to make up an example, you could cut from a shot of Lucero diving into a swimming pool to a shot of Chayo in the bathtub--but this rarely occurs in *Piernas cruzadas*.

However, the movie isn't bad and the last third is reasonably entertaining, if predictable.



Un macho en el salón de belleza [A Macho in the Beauty Salon] (Prods. Esme-Aianza Cin.-Hermes Films, ©1987) *Exec Prod:* Abraham Cherem; *Prod:* Carlos Vasallo; *Dir:* Víctor Manuel "Güero" Castro; *Scr:* Carlos Martín, Víctor M. Castro; *Story:* Carlos Martín; *Photo:* Raúl Domínguez; *Music:* Alejandro González Iñárritu; *Assoc Prod:* Ramón Félix Curto de la Calle; *Prod Mgr:* Rafael Arrillaga; *Asst Dir:* Alejandro R. Todd; *Film Ed:* Jorge Peña; *Camera Op:* Guillermo Bravo; *Makeup:* Lilia Palomino; *Union:* STIC

Cast: Alberto "El Caballo" Rojas (*Nacho*), Pedro Weber "Chatanuga" (*Próculo Carnes*), Manuel "Flaco" Ibáñez

(*Fabricio*), Diana Ferreti (*Mireya*), Charly Valentino (*Nacho's friend*), José Magaña (*Nacho's friend*), Gloriella (*Ana*), Polo Ortín (*police inspector*), Patricia Santos (*singer*), Rosalinda España, Lizbet Oliver, Adriana Rojas, Adriana Fierro, Liliana Castro, Blanca Lidia Muñoz (*ugly client*), Jorge Ortín (*vendedor*), Guillermo Inclán (*man who wants to buy bra*), Gonzalo Sánchez (*police agent*), Roger Oropeza (*police agent*)

Notes: this is a fairly entertaining *sexy-comedy*, albeit one with an overly-familiar premise. It also has one major plot flaw, and another plot device in very poor taste. One trivia note, the music score (including a rock arrangement of "La Bamba") is by Alejandro González Iñárritu, who had to wait more than a decade to make his directorial debut with *Amores perros*.

Nacho sells lingerie in the Xochimilco market; he loves Mireya, the daughter of butcher Próculo, but her father wants her to marry a wealthy (but old and nerdy) lawyer. A blonde *gringa* runs into the market one day, pursued by the police--she tries to get Nacho to help her, spills a bag of smuggled gems on the floor, and escapes. Nacho is arrested as her accomplice but manages to flee. He takes refuge in a beauty salon run by the gay Fabricio, posing as another gay man, "Bicho."

Since the police have the market and his apartment staked out, Nacho is forced to continue the masquerade. Fabricio, smitten, hires him as a masseur. To avoid Fabricio's advances, Nacho tells his new employer he has AIDS and the police want to put him in quarantine. [For most of the film, every time Nacho touches Fabricio, the latter immediately pours disinfectant on himself.]

Nacho is assigned to massage various nubile women, but his heterosexuality is soon discovered by his clients and fellow workers (but not Fabricio). While making a "house call" to the home of Ana, he is nearly caught in the act by her husband--one of the policemen who has been searching for him--but his gay act saves Nacho's skin.

Learning Mireya is scheduled to marry the lawyer in two weeks, Nacho visits her (in disguise) and convinces her to have a massage; he reveals his true identity and they make love on a regular basis, until they're discovered by don Próculo and Mireya's fiancé. The engagement is broken but Próculo still refuses to allow his daughter to marry the penniless fugitive from justice.

Nacho tells Fabricio a cure for his illness has been discovered in Europe, and convinces his boss to sell the hot gems for him, promising Fabricio that they can then consummate their relationship. Fabricio gets the money and Nacho runs out on him, buying a fleet of sausage trucks for Próculo and earning the right to marry Mireya. (The real smuggling ring has been smashed so Nacho is also clear on that score.)

The major plot flaw mentioned earlier is only obvious at the conclusion: in the market, the bag of gems dropped by the *gringa* is CLEARLY picked up by the police and pocketed by their leader (Polo Ortín, looking quite fit and slim and playing his role very straight). But later, Nacho has a handful of the jewels, worth "millions." Where did he get them? I actually went back and watched the market

sequence twice, and there is no indication he kept some of the gems, or picked the police inspector's pocket, or anything of that sort. But I guess he must have.

The "poor taste" is the AIDS reference, and Fabricio's reaction to it. Fabricio shuns any physical contact with Nacho for fear of contagion, but allows the "infected" Nacho to work as a *masseuse* for female clients (suggesting that gays hate women and want them to die). Curiously, when Fabricio learns of the "cure," he urges Nacho to have sex with him right away, even if this means he will contract AIDS (and then have to undergo the treatments himself). Nacho clearly and shamelessly manipulates Fabricio, playing on his infatuation and then--at the end--telling him to go into the massage room, undress, and wait for him (and then departing forever).

The basic plot of *Un macho en el salón de belleza* is essentially a variation on *Some Like It Hot*, and in fact is even more reminiscent of *El rey del masaje* (1986), in



which an unemployed ex-con (Carlos Monden) poses as a gay man to get a job as a masseur and then provides heterosexual services to his female clientele. Alberto Rojas gets to indulge his penchant for dressing in outrageous costumes and disguises (and to use effeminate mannerisms), and is amusing enough, although his standard role as super-stud is a little hard to believe, given his goofy features and spindly body. Flaco Ibáñez is a gay stereotype, but actually invests his part with a certain dignity. Pedro Weber, Charly Valentino, and Pepe Magaña are mostly wasted (the latter two have little or nothing to do and no bearing on the plot). There is a lot of nudity in this movie, including Rojas (no frontal though), Ferreti, Gloriella, and a host of other women.

Un macho en el salón de belleza is a little better-paced than many films of this type, although it loses focus around the half-way point and a few time-wasting and irrelevant scenes find their way into the picture as padding (a song by Patricia Santos is one such sequence, but she's nice to look at and the song is OK so we'll let this one slide). On the whole, satisfactory entertainment.

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El garañón dos [The Stallion 2] (Prods. Tollocán, © 1988) *Prod*: Guillermo Herrera; *Dir*: Alberto Rojas "El Caballo"; *Scr*: José Loza; *Photo*: Febronio Tepozte; *Music*: Tino Geiser; *Prod Mgr*: Pedro Diosdado; *Film Ed*: Jorge Rivera; *Union*: STIC

Cast: Alberto Rojas "El Caballo" (*Chicho*), Fernando Luján (*Toni*), Leticia Perdigón (*Gilberta aka Gilda*), Luis Aguilar (*agent of Ministerio Público*), Hilda Aguirre (*bargirl*), Lucero Reynoso (*Lucy, nurse*), Francis (*transvestite*), Charlie [sic] Valentino (*Charly, club owner*), Pancho Muller (*Cuco*), Arturo Cobo "Cobitos" (*merengue vendor*), Malú Reyes (*performer*), Ballet de Robin (*dancers*), Pepe Loza (*priest*), Alfredo "Pelón" Solares (*cabbie*), Maty Huitrón, Liza Willert, Rafael de Quevedo, Jaime Reyes (*club emcee*), Claudia Tate, José Luis Avendaño (*Gómez*), Luis Bravo Sosa (*"Nopalito"*), Jorge Ortín (*man in cafe*), Fernando Osés (*Felipe, robbery victim*), Leo Villanueva (*bartender*), Alfredo Rosas, Edna Gabriela

Notes: in *The Mexican Filmography*, I described this as a sequel "in name only" to *El garañón*, but after having seen the film, I must correct that error. At the end of *El garañón*, a small-town Lothario is shot and castrated by



jealous husbands of women he seduced. Since the sequel was produced by a different company and since the protagonist's name was (apparently--based on erroneous secondary sources) different in each movie, I thought the

two pictures were only peripherally related. But, I was wrong!

El garañón dos picks up where the first movie left off. Chicho still lives in his small town, but now is a harmless, child-like character. Chicho sings in the church choir, and has attracted the attention of the director (who's married to a singularly unattractive woman). To remove the temptation, the local priest sends Chicho to stay with a

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nice couple in Mexico City (the choir director turns up on the bus--having left his wife to pursue Chicho--but is beaten up and thrown off the vehicle). The ingenuous Chicho is picked up by an unscrupulous cabbie who robs him at gunpoint, dumping him on the street in his underwear. Chicho is subsequently arrested and thrown in jail for public indecency. In jail, he meets a group of transvestites, one of whom befriends him and loans him some (women's) clothes. They are released but the transvestite hits a man selling merengue outside the building; an argument ensues and the transvestite departs but Chicho and the *merenguero* are arrested!

Meanwhile, another visitor from the provinces arrives in Mexico City. Gilberta, planning to visit her aunt, is "befriended" by alleged undercover policeman Toni, who offers to take her safely to her destination. Instead, they go to his apartment where he rapes her. Dubbing her "Gilda," Toni compels her to become a bargirl. When a fight breaks out in the cabaret where they are working, Gilda and Toni become separated; she is taken to the same jail where Chicho is incarcerated. They are coincidentally released at the same time and become friends (Chicho won money and men's clothing gambling in jail).

Gilda and Chicho move in together and get jobs at the cabaret run by Chicho's transvestite acquaintance. Chicho



works as a waitress in drag. One evening, he and the club owner sit with two clients, Toni and his henchman Cuco! Chicho's wig catches on fire and Toni learns "she" is a "he." A brawl

breaks out. Toni grabs Gilda and flees, but Chicho is arrested again. However, since he was injured in the fight, he's taken to a nearby hospital for treatment.

Toni tries to promote Gilda as a dancer in a nightclub run by Charly, but she eludes him and Toni is badly beaten by the burly club emcee when he blunders into the ladies' room in search of her. Gilda visits Chicho at the hospital and helps him escape, dressed as a woman.

They team up to lure men into hotel rooms (and other places) with promises of sex, then rob them. Chicho, dressed like a woman, is sometimes the



"bait," and sometimes it is Gilda. They decide to continue their criminal career until they can afford a penile transplant operation for Chicho. However, they are separated once more when Chicho robs a wealthy

cattleman in a nightclub restroom but is captured by the bartender. The victim won't press charges, so Chicho is released. He returns to the apartment he shares with Gilda; they are held at gunpoint by the vengeful Toni. However, the erstwhile pimp is shot in the groin and castrated by the apartment house caretaker.

Chicho receives his transplant and as the film concludes, he and Gilda decide to get married. The judge of the Registro Civil is shocked to see Chicho--he's the same man who (before transferring out of his former unit) repeatedly sent Chicho to jail!

El garañón dos is not a *sexy-comedy* at all, although it has its comic moments. Many of these are slapstick violence in very doubtful taste: Toni is kicked in the groin frequently (it's a running gag), he's beaten up more than once (graphically losing teeth in one case), shot in the groin (blood spurting out between his fingers!), and spends the latter sections of the movie bandaged, speaking in an odd manner, and limping (he's finally seen in wheelchair, and gets a bucket of water thrown on him!). Toni is an unsympathetic character but that doesn't mean it's funny when he is injured, particularly since most of these incidents are depicted in a painfully realistic fashion. The other main "comic" aspect of the movie is the running gag of Chicho repeatedly showing up in the police station--to the disgust of Luis Aguilar's character--but the general plot of the film is clearly more melodrama than comedy.

There is no real nudity in *El garañón dos* (one character briefly flashes her butt and her tube top slips a bit to expose her breasts) and--aside from Toni's implied rape of Gilda--no sexual activity. As Chicho, Alberto Rojas does get to indulge in his penchant for disguises (spending a considerable portion of the movie in drag), but (obviously) doesn't play a sexually-rapacious, irresistible character: Chicho may be unable to function sexually as a man but he makes it clear that he isn't gay, so he is



essentially sexless for 99% of the film's running time.

Rojas does a good job in the leading role, but Fernando Luján overacts his part a bit. Leticia Perdigón plays her role straight and is satisfactory; Lucero Reynoso (the wife of Alberto Rojas in real-life) is pleasant as a friendly nurse, and it's nice to see Luis Aguilar on screen, although he doesn't have much to do. The supporting cast is adequate in minor roles, although Charly Valentino and Malú Reyes seem to have been included just to give them to the chance to perform one musical number each and pad the film out to 90 minutes.

The production values are OK: the movie was shot on location but the photography, editing, sound, etc., are fine.



Dos cuates a todo dar [Two Great Pals] (Prods. E.G.A., 1988) *Dir:* Javier Durán; *Scr:* Jorge Patiño, Edgardo Gazcón; *Story:* Edgardo Gazcón; *Photo:* Agustín Lara; *Music:* Ernesto Cortázar Jr.; *Prod Mgr:* Luis Guevara; *Prod Chief:* Carlos Pérez; *Asst Dir:* Javier Vera; *Film Ed:* Sergio Soto; *Décor:* Raúl Cárdenas; *Makeup:* Victoria Celis; *Camera Op:* Fermín Hernández; *Union:* STIC



Cast: Alberto Rojas “El Caballo” (*Remigio Sánchez*), Fernando Luján (*Cándido Malacara*), Rebeca Silva (*Myrna*), María Cardinal (*Dulce*), Brigitte Aube (*Karla*), Martha Elena Cervantes (*Irene Muller*), Pancho Muller (*General*), Lizzeta Romo (*gypsy*), Arturo Alegro (*Godínez*), Alejandra Meyer (*doña Concha*), Nora Torrero (*Eva*), Jorge Ortín (*Eva’s lover*), Luis Guevara (*Inocencio*), Lucero Reynoso (*Vanessa*), María Prado (*doña Cuca*), Arturo Cobos (*bureaucrat*), Colocho (*apartment superintendent*), Eugenio Cobo (*Hans Muller*), Humberto Elizondo (*businessman*), José L. Murillo (*Colonel*), León Guillermo Gutiérrez (*doctor*), Miguel Angel Martínez, Elizabeth Villagómez, Eduardo Lugo

Notes: this is a reasonably entertaining *sexy-comedy*, helped by the presence of Fernando Luján. Luján had been in quite a few movies of the 1960s and some in the 1970s, but didn’t do much on-screen in the ‘80s until the end of the decade when he appeared in a handful of movies. In the last several decades, Luján has parlayed his more mature image into a fairly high-profile career once more. In *Dos cuates a todo dar* he plays well against Alberto Rojas (they also worked together in *El garañón 2*), although he isn’t a straight man to the comic actor.

One rather unusual aspect of this movie is the presence of two somewhat mature, *zaftig* actresses in leading roles—Rebeca Silva and María Cardinal. Silva has a major, full-nude scene, and while she’s attractive, she is carrying a few extra kilos, if you get my drift. Cardinal has a couple of brief topless scenes but remains mostly clothed, however her multiple chins are a giveaway that she too no longer qualifies for the “starlet” designation. Nonetheless, both of these actresses handle their roles effectively, with Silva being particularly cheerful for a

change. Oddly, the other actresses—Aube, Cervantes, Torrero—do *not* have the expected nude scenes.

Remigio and Cándido are agents for the police, who in the film’s opening sequence help capture a shipment of drugs. However, a short time later they lose a “raffle,” and are laid off from the force due to the economic crisis. They open a detective agency, and are convinced to sign a life insurance policy by which the surviving partner will inherit one million dollars. Remigio also argues with his wife and mother-in-law and moves out; he takes up residence in Cándido’s house. Remigio is having an affair with dancer Myrna, while Cándido’s girlfriend is Dulce.

Meanwhile, criminal mastermind Hans Muller has berated his inept aide Godínez for losing the drugs and money to the police (Godínez was arrested but has since been freed due to Muller’s influence and money). He orders Godínez to assassinate the two detectives. Muller is also conspiring with Karla to obtain valuable, top-secret economic information from her lover, a powerful businessman.

For the rest of the movie, Godínez repeatedly attempts (and fails) to murder Remigio and Cándido. Each man thinks the other is behind the attempts on his life (which are multiplied by legitimate accidents, and attempts by Remigio’s mother-in-law to kill him!). Coincidentally, Hans Muller’s wife suspects him of being unfaithful to her, and hires Cándido to investigate. Cándido finds a diskette containing the secret data and tries to convince his former superior in the police force of a conspiracy to exploit Mexico’s natural resources, but is not believed. Muller offers to buy back the diskette—this precipitates a gunfight but the police arrive and arrest Muller and Karla. Remigio and Cándido are restored to their positions on the force.

Like a number of other *sexy-comedies*, there are some aspects of *Dos cuates a todo dar* which either seem at odds with a comedy (people getting shot) or just in bad taste (Godínez wetting his pants several times, Remigio eating a rat poison-laced cake and frothing at the mouth). Still, the general tone of the movie is amusing, and



the performances are of a overall high standard. Luis Guevara has a larger role than usual, and María Prado for once plays a relatively sympathetic character. Arturo Cobo has an amusing, one-scene cameo as a bureaucrat who demands to see the detective agency’s permits, licenses, etc. When Remigio, frustrated, pulls his pistol and points it at the man, his only response is “Do you have a license to carry firearms?”

Some additional amusement can be derived today by the film’s use of computers. While the cars, clothes, etc. have

not dated significantly, it is quite odd to see people using 5.25 inch diskettes, playing Atari, and working on computers with crude graphics and fonts. This doesn't hurt the movie (unlike dated '80s pictures constructed around computer use), but it shows how computer technology has advanced much more rapidly than most other aspects of culture in a short period of time.

No classic, but it provides some fun.



Un macho en el reformatorio de señoritas [A Male in the Girls' Reform School] (Prods. Esmé-Alianza Cinematográfica-Hermes Films, ©1988) *Exec Prod:* Abraham Cherem; *Prod:* Carlos Vasallo; *Dir-Scr:* Víctor Manuel "Güero" Castro; *Photo:* Fernando Colín; *Music:* Alejandro González Iñárritu; *Assoc Prod:* Ramón Félix Curto de la Calle; *Prod Mgr:* Rafael Arrillaga; *Asst Dir:* R. Calixto Sánchez; *Film Ed:* Jorge Peña; *Camera Op:* José Luis Lemus; *Makeup:* Antonio Castañeda; *Script Clerk:* Roberto Castillo; *Sound Engin:* Guillermo Carrasco Soto; *Re-rec:* René Ruiz Cerón; *Union:* STIC

Cast: Alberto "El Caballo" Rojas (*Tomas*; *Claudia*), Manuel "Flaco" Ibáñez (*Fausto*), Lina Santos (*Elizabeth Valdez*), Felicia Mercado (*Carla Valdez*), Hilda Aguirre (*Warden Rodríguez*), Pedro Weber "Chatanuga" (*delegado*), Charly Valentino (*vendor*, *Pingarrón*), Joaquín García "Borolas" (*don Joaquín*), Princesa Lea (*brothel madam*), Jannette Mass (*Jannette Mass*), Rosario Escobar (*La Bronca*, *prisoner*), Javier Ruán (*Dr. Ricardo Sifuentes*), Arturo [Cobo] García "Cobitos" (*Indalecio Recio*), "Güero" Castro (*film director*), Pedrín [Orozco] (*Gumaro*, *el Chupamirto*), Abril Campillo (*prisoner*), Iris Cristal, Gioconda (*prostitute*), Lucero Reynoso (*script clerk*), Erika Magnus, Rosalinda España, Lizbeth Olivier (*prisoner*), Adriana Rojas, Elizabeth Villagómez, Adriana Fierro, Liliana Castro, Jacqueline Castro, Leticia Conde, Imelda Durán, Gabriela del Valle, Laura Tovar (*prisoner*), Ángela Valverde, Nora Torrero (*guard*), Blanca Nieves (*Virginia*, *prostitute*), Blanca Lidia Muñoz (*Elizabeth*, *prostitute*), Guillermo Inclán (*warden*), Jorge Ortín (*sgt.*), Gonzalo Sánchez, Roger Oropeza, Luis Enrique Ochoa, Abel Hinojosa, Carlos Corzo, Gonzalo Rosas

Notes: *Un macho en el reformatorio de señoritas* is one of the most extreme examples of Alberto Rojas'

predilection for "dressing up" in his films. Rojas plays 2 different roles (actor Tomás and prison guard Claudia), but as Tomás—a cinema makeup artist and would-be actor—he also disguises himself as six other characters (a Quasimodo-like hunchback, a priest, a Hare Krishna, a police official, a Chinese reporter, and Claudia herself).

Aside from the hunchback (who wears heavy facial makeup and a large hump, along with a silly-looking wig), none of these characters looks radically different than Tomás, but the makeups and costumes are all very competently executed on the whole. Rojas doesn't try to fool the viewer (only other people in the film) into believing he's another person, but he's a good enough actor to be reasonably convincing in his impersonations. Since Tomás is a makeup artist and actor, this makes his disguises somewhat more believable to the audience (i.e., he's not just an ordinary guy pulling off these tricks).

Movie studio makeup artist Tomás is engaged to



Elizabeth, but she won't marry him as long as her ailing grandfather Indalecio needs her. Elizabeth's cousin Carla and Dr. Sifuentes apparently share her concern about the older man's health. One day, Tomás is denied entrance to the family home, and Carla and Dr. Sifuentes later deny knowing him, ordering him away at gunpoint. Tomás and his assistant Fausto—using various disguises—investigate Elizabeth's disappearance. They eventually learn she's accused of provoking her grandfather's fatal heart attack and has been arrested.

Fausto wines and dines Claudia, head of the guards at the Reformatorio de Señoritas, while Tomás impersonates the woman and penetrates the institution. He learns Elizabeth is there, but is being held in solitary confinement. Before Tomás and Fausto can come up with a plan to free her, gardener Gumaro shows up with the wig and pistol that Carla used to frame Elizabeth for don Indalecio's murder. Carla and Dr. Sifuentes are arrested and Elizabeth is released. As the film concludes, Tomás weds Elizabeth and Fausto marries the horse-faced Claudia.

The *deus ex machina* conclusion of *Un macho en el reformatorio de señoritas* makes most of the preceding sleuthing by Tomás and Fausto a moot point: even though they locate Elizabeth, they neither clear her name nor free her from prison. Presumably, if they hadn't done anything, Gumaro would still have come forward with the exculpatory evidence.



One aspect of the film is quite puzzling. I'm not sure if it refers to a previous film, or some other pop culture reference, but when Tomás initiates his search for Elizabeth, he says "this is a case for The Spider!" (*La Araña*). He doesn't wear a mask or anything, and aside from a couple of mentions in the dialogue, there's no further explanation or discussion of this.

It's interesting to note that the depiction of the girls' reformatory is quite benign. The warden makes a point of referring to the young women there as *internados* (internees) rather than *reclusos* (inmates), and says the purpose is to reform them rather than punish them. The *internados* are seen exercising outside, the cells are quite large and brightly-lit (even solitary confinement isn't bad), and even

though one group of women goes on strike for better food, they aren't mistreated or physically repressed.



This is considerably different than the standard image of prisons in Mexican cinema, even in comedies like *Un macho en el cárcel de mujeres*.

Un macho en el reformatorio de señoritas isn't especially amusing. The filmmakers apparently felt Rojas in wacky costumes and makeup, plus lots of *albures* (spicy dialogue), would provide enough laughs (there's not much physical humour and what there is, isn't especially well-executed) and—combined with the plentiful nudity—this would satisfy audiences. [There is a lot of full frontal female nudity in the film (although Lina Santos and Felicia Mercado are excluded), Hilda Aguirre has a topless scene, and even a couple of shots of Rojas' buttocks. There is also a fair amount of simulated sex.]

Although the basic plot is relatively straight-forward—Tomás and Fausto follow a trail of clues to find Elizabeth—the individual sequences outweigh their welcome by running too long. There are also some extraneous scenes (although not as many as some films), including a long sequence of Tomás singing a serious, romantic song (written by Alberto Rojas himself) to Elizabeth, and tedious, irrelevant dialogue scenes between Flaco Ibáñez and Borolas and between Rojas, Ibáñez and Charly Valentino.

There are plenty of film-related in-jokes. The "hunchback" makeup in the opening scene is modeled on Lon Chaney's Quasimodo, posters for *Rosa de la frontera* and other Mexican films appear on a dressing room wall (and posters for Stallone's *Cobra* and the TV show "Knight Rider" can be seen in the women's prison!), there are dialogue references to Valentín Trujillo and the "Momia azteca," and one inmate in the *reformatorio* has a bizarre, annoying voice extremely reminiscent of La India María.

A name in the credits which might surprise some people is Alejandro González Iñárritu—you know, the man who has now won two Best Directing Oscars in a row? Yes, before he started directing important, artistic films, Alejandro did the scores for a handful of *sexy-comedies* and action films in the late 1980s. Frankly, the music is nothing special here, but it's amusing to see González Iñárritu's name in the credits anyway.



The performances in *Un macho en el reformatorio de señoritas* are generally satisfactory. Rojas and Ibáñez handle the "comedy" heavy lifting (Pedro Weber does the best he can in his main sequence, which is fitfully amusing, while Arturo Cobo is wasted and Pedrín Orozco is adequate), Santos, Mercado and Ruán play it straight, and everyone else just delivers their lines and/or removes their clothing on cue. Production values are satisfactory. There is one effective split-screen showing Rojas in two of his characters at the same time, but most of the time Tomás and Claudia are not in the same shot.



Dos nacos en el planeta de las mujeres [Two Nerds on the Planet of Women] (Cin. del Prado-Hermes Film Internacional-Alianza Cin., ©1989) *Exec Prod:* Abraham Cherem; *Prod:* Carlos Vasallo; *Dir:* Alberto Rojas; *Scr:* Alejandro Licon; *Photo:* Raúl Domínguez; *Music:* Alejandro Giacomán; *Prod Mgr:* Javier García Mata; *Asst Dir:* Román Hernández; *Film Ed:* Jorge Peña; *Art Dir:* Alberto Villaseñor; *Sound:* Noé Rincón; *Union:* STIC

Cast: Alberto Rojas "El Caballo" (*Caralampio*), César Bono (*Ambrosio Peláez*), Lorena Herrera (*Elisa*), Jacaranda Alfaro (*Queen*), Lucero Reinoso [sic] (*Toribia*), Adriana Rojas (?*Consuelo*), Blanca Nieves (*Agata*), Azela Robinson (*Tacha*), Bárbara Ferrer (?*Nacha*), Alejandra

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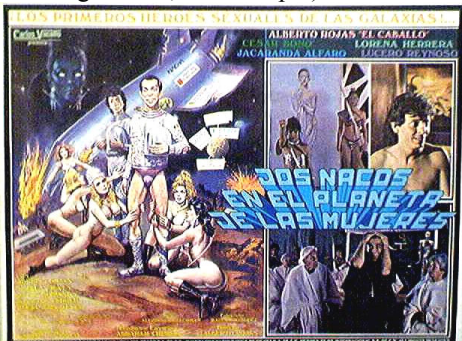
Meyers [sic] (*Elisa's mother, the High Priestess*), José Luis Caro (*Engineer Luna*), Metzli Adamina, Alejandra [sic] Castillo, Carina del Sol, Josefina Tovar, Silvia Ibáñez, Perla Mariana, Claudia Toledo, Liliana López, Elena Martínez, Nayelli, Conni Chávez, Raymunda Arechau, Fernando Nesme, Mónica Castro, Rosa Olaya, Adrián Rojas, Margot Shaw, Rafael Horta, Juan Imperio, Beatriz Arroyo

Notes: this is a mildly amusing *sexy comedy-science* fiction film, a rare Mexican genre movie set on another planet (among the others, *Conquistador de la luna*, *El planeta de las mujeres invasoras*, and *Gigantes planetarios*), even if the "other planet" is represented by the Mexican desert (and "Rujem," the city of women, is a motley collection of tents and ramshackle buildings in said desert).

The low budget of the picture is evident not only in the spartan art direction and "sets," but also in the lack of special effects of any kind. Space travel is represented by stock footage of a rocket taking off, then an image of a triangle on a "radar" screen.



The planet of women is one of those sci-fi movie societies (like *Mongo*) which mixes archaic weaponry (bows and arrows, spears) with high-tech scientific equipment (golf carts used as "autos," and a machine which extracts sperm from unwilling donors, for example).



It's interesting (and a bit disheartening) to note that there's relatively little nudity on display here (particularly since the opening credits are superimposed over a scene of full-frontal nudity!), with Lorena Herrera, Azela Robinson, and Jacaranda Alfaro keeping their clothes on at all times (unsurprising in the first two cases--since I don't think either actress did nudity in movies--but kind of a shock with regards to Alfaro, since she usually wasn't shy about disrobing on screen). There are also at least two mildly graphic deaths shown (a woman has her throat cut, and another is crushed by a death-trap concealed in a bed), which tend to mitigate the light-hearted tone of the rest of the picture.

Four Mexican rockets have successfully launched but all have vanished into space. The fifth ship contains

astronauts Caralampio and Ambrosio, but it too disappears when it enters the "blue zone." When the rocket malfunctions, Caralampio parachutes to safety. He discovers a talking parrot that he dubs "Viernes" (Friday) and tries to make the best of his new life on the unknown planet (with three suns) where he now resides.

Meanwhile, in the city of Rejum, inhabited solely by women, the Queen is disturbed to learn the supply of "fertilizing liquid" has been stolen. She doesn't know it's been taken by Toribia (a female astronaut from a previous space mission who has somehow become part of the all-woman society of Rejum) and her henchwomen Tacha and Nacha. An anonymous note demands a large ransom for its return. Otherwise, the society will perish. The High Priestess of Rejum prays for a miracle so her daughter Elisa can become pregnant. Suddenly, Ambrosio



plummets to the ground, crashing into their home! The two women discover he's a "man," a being who can impregnate women "naturally," and Ambrosio is "convinced" to have sex with Elisa so she can have a child. However, his presence is discovered and he is imprisoned. Toribia, who recognizes her former colleague, orders him murdered, but the Queen saves his life and orders Ambrosio to produce the "fertilizing liquid" (by hooking him up to a machine which forcefully extracts it from him--an idea probably borrowed from Harlan Ellison's *A Boy and His Dog*). The Queen also sends Agata and Consuelo into the desert to find the aged seeress Manuela, who they hope will be able to discover who took the city's supply of liquid.

Agata and Consuelo instead meet Caralampio, who introduces them to live sex. They learn Manuela is long dead, so Caralampio disguises himself as the old witch and returns to Rejum with his two new friends. Toribia tries to assassinate "Manuela" but is exposed as the thief, bitten by a tarantula (intended for Caralampio) and dies.

Caralampio and Ambrosio think they are home free, but

the Queen says their presence is disruptive to the all-woman society and orders them executed. Before this can occur, rockets from Earth arrive (off-screen, of course), bringing dozens of men who hunt down the women of Rejum to take as wives (or mistresses, or whatever). Caralampio has to console the lovely Elisa, since Ambrosio has forsaken her for his new "love"--the extraction machine!



Dos nacidos en el planeta de las mujeres doesn't deliver any belly laughs, but the picture has a mildly amusing

tone. Rojas goes through his usual routines (if he did not dress up like a woman in any of his starring films, I'd be shocked) in confident style; Bono and Meyer also turn in professional performances, while Lorena Herrera and Azela Robinson (despite their failure to do nudity) are attractive in their skimpy costumes.

As mentioned earlier, the picture was probably made very cheaply, but the photography is fine and Alejandro Giacomán's music score is almost too good for the film. The script has a lot of glaring holes (how long has Toribia been in Rejum, why do spaceships always crash there, where did the original supply of "fertilizing liquid" come from, what's up with the mix of primitive weapons and scientific devices, why do the women on this planet--and the parrot--speak, read, and write Spanish, etc.) but if one doesn't try to apply any sort of logic or common sense to *Dos nacos en el planeta de las mujeres*, the movie can provide 90 minutes of inoffensive and mild entertainment.

[reprinted from MFB 13/8 (2007)]



Todos queremos con ella [We All Want to Do It with Her]

(Prods. Barba Loza, 1993) *Prod*: Ramón Barba Loza; *Dir*: Alberto Rojas; *Scr*: Alberto Rojas González; *Photo*: Agustín Lara; *Music*: Richard Cuervo; *Asst Dir*: Gabriela Portillo; *Sound Op*: Noé Rincón

Cast: Alberto Rojas "El Caballo" (Mario), Lucía Mariscal "Lencha" (Paz), Eduardo de la Peña "Lalo el Mimo" (Salustio), Nora Torrero (Claudia), Gabriel Varela (Jean Pierre), Diana Herrera (Tamara), Lucero Reyes (Pasesita), Sandra de la Cruz & Desiree Riveroll (nurses), José Luis Carreño (cabbie), Rebeca Morales "Yuriko," Rosa Gómez "Vanessa"

Notes: this is a tedious direct-to-video comedy which at least has some nudity (nothing is more annoying than a "sexy comedy" *videohome* with a smutty script but no nudity). A small measure of my dislike for this movie can



be attributed to the horrible sound recording --I would blame it on the Mill Creek DVD, except that the other films in the set are fine and even the music tracks on this film are OK,

but the dialogue is frequently unintelligible. So some of the details of the following synopsis might be a little bit inaccurate!

Mario, the assistant to businessman Salustio, is told by his boss that he has to let Salustio's mistress Claudia stay in his house in Acapulco. Salustio's overbearing wife Paz controls the family money and he can't afford to have her learn of his infidelity. Because Paz and her grown daughter Pasesita might visit Mario's house while they are on vacation, Claudia has to disguise herself as "Claudio,"

Mario's male cousin. Mario finds himself attracted to Claudia, who accepts Salustio's money but dislikes him. Meanwhile, stripper Tamara--Mario's psychotically jealous ex-girlfriend--compels his gay friend Jean Pierre to reveal Mario's whereabouts.

Various pointless and time-wasting things occur, such as Paz and her daughter catching Mario kissing "Claudio." They think he's gay, ha ha! Salustio, trying to get away



from his wife and daughter, slips "horse laxative" in their orange juice, then accidentally drinks some himself. Ha ha, bathroom humor! Jean Pierre is caught in a stalled elevator with two women who force him to have sex with them--he

doesn't like it, because he's gay! Ha ha! Tamara arrives and tries to kill Mario and Claudia, so Mario disguises himself as a woman. More cross-dressing, ha ha! Tamara, chasing them in a rental car, gets in a wreck and is put into a full-body cast. Medical humor, ha ha! Claudia and Mario finally stroll off together.

Nora Torrero has an attractive body (as does Lucero Rojas, and both of them are seen in skimpy bikinis) but her face can be quite unappealing from certain angles. When she's in drag as "Claudio," she's really unpleasant-looking, sadly. Lalo el Mimo, Lucila Mariscal, and Alberto Rojas go through their usual paces: they're all pros but have very little to work with here, and Rojas has to take the blame for the flat script and weak pacing as well.

A waste of time, mostly.



María Luisa Alcalá Films

Un paso al más acá... [One Step Beyond]

(Radeant Films, ©1989) *Exec Prod*: Raúl de Anda III; *Dir-Scr*: Gilberto de Anda; *Photo*: Antonio de Anda; *Music*: Gilberto de Anda; *Songs sung by*: María Enríquez; *Prod Mgr*: Héctor Baltierra C.; *Asst Dir*: Carlos Durán E.; *Film Ed*: Enrique Murillo R.; *Camera Op*: José Luis Vera; *Makeup*: Carmen de la Torre; *Dialog Rec*: Eduardo Martínez; *Re-rec*: Ricardo Saldívar; *Union*: STIC

Cast: Sergio Goyri (Sergio), Luz María Jerez (María), Juan Peláez (actor), María Luisa Alcalá (Lupe), Quintin Bulnes (Servero, concierge), Alejandro Guce (Raúl), Lorena Herrera (Monique), Pepe Flores "Yaguer" (Luis), Jacaranda Alfaro (Yvette), don Arturo Martínez (Bernardo), Amparo Arozamena (mother-in-law), Tito Guillén (bread man), Arturo Martínez Jr. (plumber), José



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L. Murillo (*garlic vendor*), Gilberto de Anda (*police inspector*), Claudia Campos

Notes: this multi-story horror comedy is set in a luxury condo and the various stories are intercut, but for simplicity's sake I will summarize their plots individually.

Lupe arrives from the provinces and inquires about a "Servant Wanted" sign. Building manager Servero says the position is with the resident of the penthouse [note: this is a really luxurious apartment!], who isn't around right now. Lupe is admitted to the apartment to await the arrival

of her new boss. Searching for something to snack on in the meantime, Lupe finds the refrigerator contains only containers of red liquid, which she assumes is some sort of juice (and consumes). Eventually, she is introduced to the tenant, who has a pasty complexion, dresses in odd formal wear, and sleeps during the day...in a coffin! Lupe, convinced her boss is a vampire, buys large quantities of garlic and a squirt-gun (which she fills with holy water). The next night she



confronts him, but he explains he's simply an actor preparing for a new role. Lupe says she's sorry to hear that, because she thought they had something in common—since she's a werewolf! She changes on the spot and slays the actor (offscreen).

This story is mildly amusing, playing on Alcalá's previously established (TV) persona as a feisty and not-too-bright servant. There isn't much substance to the story, however, and the final "transformation" scene in the twist ending is badly botched --Alcalá is shown wearing some furry makeup, then a puppet appears briefly, and finally an actual dog is shown. Some werewolf! (The



common Mexican name "Lupe" is short for "Guadalupe," but it's also reminiscent of *lupus*, the Latin word for "wolf." A coincidence?)

Another sub-plot involves newlyweds Sergio and María, also residents of the building. A leaky kitchen sink causes Sergio to seek out the maintenance man in the basement (Arturo Martínez Jr. in a funny bit). The man is finally convinced (bribed) to look at the leak. He's under the sink working when María enters the kitchen and--mistaking the plumber for her husband--grabs his crotch! The plumber jumps in surprise and hits his head, killing himself. Sergio and María have to hide the body when her parents arrive for dinner (Arturo Martínez Sr. and Amparo Arozamena, both very funny). They later take the corpse downstairs, wrapped in a carpet, then drive to the woods and bury it. As soon as they depart, the "corpse" claws its way out of the grave and starts to walk back to town. Some time later, Sergio and María hear a knock at their door, and open it, only to discover the "dead" plumber waiting for them! The scene cuts to the outside of the building, where the bodies of the newlyweds--who died of fright--are being carried away. The plumber protests as he's led away, charged with murder.

This is a pretty funny sequence although the "resurrection" of the plumber occurs with "spooky" lighting and music, suggesting some sort of supernatural event when it appears he was simply not dead at all, just unconscious. Otherwise, the performers and the script are amusing overall.

Interestingly enough--given the origin of the third section--this second episode was also based on an urban legend. Jan Brunvand's "The Vanishing Hitchhiker" (p. 147-148) contains this tale, dating from 1969:

"This lady came home from the grocery store, and she saw her husband working under the car. All that was exposed were his legs, so in passing she reached down, unzipped his zipper, chuckled to herself, and went into the house. Immediately she saw her husband sitting in the easy chair reading a newspaper. She cried, 'Who is THAT under the car?' and her husband replied, 'My mechanic.' She told her husband what she'd done, and they went outside to find the mechanic lying unconscious in a pool of blood, because when the lady unzipped his pants he was so startled that he sat up and clobbered his head under the car." Sound familiar?

The third sequence is yet another Mexican cinema variation on the well-known "Phantom Hitchhiker" tale. Raúl and Luis pick up two attractive young women on a deserted stretch of highway. Introduced as Monique and Yvette, the women take their new friends back to the apartment house and they soon pair off and go to bed. The next day, Raúl and Luis have to leave in a hurry, promising to return soon, although Monique says this won't be possible. Luis discovers he left his watch in the apartment, so they go back to retrieve it. Servero tells them there is no such apartment nor any such tenants as they describe. In the building's dusty storeroom, amid old furniture left by former occupants, Luis finds his watch. Puzzled, the two young men go back to the spot where they met Yvette

and Monique and eventually discover a wrecked car in a wooded ravine. Two skeletons are inside--Yvette and Monique. They wanted their bodies to be found so they could be decently buried.



This is also a good little episode, albeit a predictable one. Lorena Herrera and Jacaranda Alfaro are both sexy and Guce and Flores are believable as horny young men who can't believe their luck. The conclusion is a bit creepier than some similar versions of the urban legend--instead of a photograph or a tombstone revealing the deaths of the women, the audience actually sees their wrecked auto and their skeletons, which is somehow rather sad as well as spooky.

The movie concludes with a brief epilogue in which concierge Servero reveals himself to be the Devil.

Gilberto de Anda has made a surprising number of fantasy films during his career, although *Un paso al más acá* is one of the few horror comedies in his credits. I personally think the movie would have been a little better if the different stories had been kept separate rather than intercut, and the "Lupe" story is the weakest of the three, but overall this is a decent piece of entertainment with a good cast.

[reprinted from *MFB* Vol. 10 #8 (2004)]



Investigador privado...muy privado [Private Investigator...Very Private] (Prods. Cinetelmex/Cin. Filmex ©1989) *Exec Prod*: Alberto Pedret, Jorge Rojas Álvarez; *Dir*: Jesús Frago; *Scr*: Reyes Bercini; *Photo*: Agustín Lara; *Music*: Armando Manzanero; *Film Ed*: Rogelio Zúñiga; *Music Arr*: Fernando Ledezma; *Sound*: Samy Ovilla; *Re-rec*: Ricardo Saldivar

Cast: Polo Polo [Leopoldo García Peláez] (*Leopoldo Chávez*), Charly Valentino (*El Foco*), Felicia Mercado (*Inés*), María Luisa Alcalá (*Tencha*), Humberto Elizondo (*Soto*), Gerardo Zepeda "El Chiquilín" (*Negro*), Alfredo "Pelón" Solares (*Sr. Ruiz*), Azela Robinson (*Isaura*), Jorge Ortín (*Adela's boyfriend*), Georgina, Agustín Bernal (*Flaco*), Ángela Valverde, José Luis Carreño*, Olga Rinzo, José Luis Carol* (*first client, husband of Adela*), René Álvarez, Las Estrellas Latinas de Raúl [Rahul on end credits] Mendoza

(*band*), Ana María de Panamá, Alfredo Froylán Rosas (*?high rise porter*), Eva Marín, Alfredo Ramírez Balcázar, Simón Chávez, Clarissa Rendón, Enrique Flores Tovar, Gerardo Salazar, Rubén Recio Vizcarra, Roy de la Serna, José Luis Barrasa, Eleuterio Safont Obrados, Sadoc Sierra, Juan Guzmán, José Antonio Salinas, Tomás Vicente Alcázar, Luciano Reyes Muñoz

*[Carreño is billed, Carol is not; these may be the same person. José Luis Carol is sometimes billed as José Luis Caro.]

Notes: *Investigador privado...muy privado* is not a *sexy-comedy* (there's only a bit of partial nudity) and in fact is not really much of a comedy at all. It's essentially a straight crime film that just happens to feature a number of comic actors (Polo Polo, Valentino, Alcalá) in leading roles. The humour is almost entirely dialogue-based (as opposed to slapstick) and is very mild.

Polo Polo had a minor film career in the latter half of the Eighties (he was much more popular in live venues) and in *Investigador privado* his only *shtick* is to seemingly misunderstand what other people are saying, leading to an incongruous reply. For example, his girlfriend Inés has been kidnaped and is being held in another room. Leo demands proof she's alive. "It's me, idiot!" she shouts. "You're not an idiot," he replies, "you've just been abducted."

Office worker Leo is fired from his position, but this merely frees him up to pursue his dream of becoming a private detective. He has graduated from a mail-order correspondence school (his girlfriend asks him if he got his diploma "in Tepito"—Tepito is a Mexico City *barrio* known for its flea markets) and sets up an office, with



sassy *portera* Tencha acting as his "receptionist." Leo's first job is to shadow a woman who's been cheating on her husband. He witnesses her infidelity, but the cuckolded man demands photographic proof, so Leo coopts his pal, street photographer El Foco, into snapping photos of the act. Unfortunately, they're both spotted by the wife's angry (and armed) boyfriend; they escape with the film, only to discover Leo followed the wrong woman!

Leo's next client is Isaura, who suspects her husband of cheating on her. Leo and El Foco trail the man (Sr. Soto) to the same high-rise apartment building where his first client's wife had her tryst! After watching their new suspect depart, they decide to investigate his apartment in



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his absence: they discover crates of automatic weapons (Soto is smuggling them into the USA) and take photos, narrowly escaping when they're confronted by Soto's burly henchman.

Soto abducts Leo's girlfriend Inés and offers to swap her for the incriminating photos, intending to eliminate Leo, Inés and El Foco when he gets the pictures. Leo, with some help from his friends, breaks up the gun deal; Soto is hit by a car drive by his angry wife.

The performances in *Investigador privado* are all fine. Polo Polo, a chunky, middle-aged fellow, is not exactly a



dynamic comedian but he's a decent actor and delivers his lines (and jokes) convincingly. Charly Valentino is satisfactory if not wonderful, María Luisa Alcalá is amusing, and Felicia Mercado and Azela Robinson are attractive (Robinson

appears in two scenes wearing sheer dresses which are rendered translucent by backlighting).

Most of Reyes Bercini's scripts were non-comedies; he'd previously written *Llámenme Mike*, a black comedy/detective film, and *Investigador privado*... leans in this direction, particularly after the early sequence when Leo is fired from his job and plays a practical joke on his ex-boss (the film actually opens with a brutal assassination carried out by Soto's henchmen). Like "Mike" in the earlier movie, Leo imagines himself to be the sort of



private detective one reads about in novels or sees in films. Along with his detective school diploma, Leo gets a magnifying glass, handcuffs and a trenchcoat. Surprisingly, he is relatively competent at

his job, and in the final confrontation with Soto and the other gun runners, he acquits himself well.

The script also gives the characters a certain amount of depth. Inés is irritated when Leo loses his job: they've been engaged for 10 years and she wants to know when they'll be married. He says he's got a new career, and will definitely wed her when he makes his "first million." She's pleased, until he adds "million dollars." [This film was made when the "old peso" was still in use, and had been greatly devalued. In 1993, it was replaced with the "new peso," at the rate of 1,000 old = 1 new. So a million old pesos wasn't much at all (just over \$300 US!), but a million dollars was!] Later, Leo gets fed up with her lack of faith and—somewhat surprisingly—breaks their engagement (although of course they reconcile after she's

been kidnaped and rescued, but prior to this there's no suggestion Leo is pining away for her).

During the final fight with Soto's gang, Inés is confronted by one of the weapons dealers; he's unarmed, and demands that she drop her pistol, but she shoots him dead, instead! This is sort of weird, but is quickly forgotten. The film concludes with a nightclub sequence, as Leo, Inés, El Foco and (I think) Isaura dancing to the music of "Las Estrellas Latinas de Raúl Mendoza."

The production values are adequate, with one significant exception: the sound recording. The majority of the film was shot on location, and there are numerous interior scenes in which traffic noise and other street sounds can clearly be heard, at times making the dialogue difficult to understand. This is particularly noticeable in the footage shot in Leo's office, but is also a problem at other times.

Despite the paucity of laughs and a slim plot, *Investigador privado* is not without some entertainment value.



Violación [Rape] (Cin. Sol, ©1988) *Exec Prod:* Gonzalo Elvira Álvarez; *Assoc Prod:* Oro Films; *Dir:* Valentín Trujillo; *Scr Adapt:* Jorge Manrique, Valentín Trujillo, Gilberto de Anda; *Story:* Jorge Manrique, Valentín Trujillo; *Photo:* Manuel Tejada; *Music:* Diego Herrera; *Prod Mgr:* Francisco Pérez Nieto; *Co-ord General of Prod:* Jorge Manrique; *Prod Chief:* Victor Lozoya; *Asst Dir:* Carlos Durán; *Film Ed:* Sergio Soto; *Art*

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Dir: Patricia Sentis de Trujillo; *Camera Op:* Agustín Meza; *Sound Op:* Alberto Flores; *Sound Ed:* Ignacio Soto; *Makeup:* Guillermina Oropeza; *Union:* STIC

Cast: Valentín Trujillo (*José Garrido*), Mario Almada (*Cmdte. Navarro*), Olivia Collins (*Laura*), Eleazar García Jr. (*Irak Yazbek*), Claudia Guzmán (*Jeniffer*), Rodolfo Rodríguez (*Sancho*), María Fernanda García (*Alma*), José Chávez Trowe (*agente of Ministerio Público*), Carlos East (*doctor*), Miguel Manzano (*Licenciado*), Arturo Martínez hijo (*El Borrego*), María Luisa Alcalá (*Agustina*), Gilberto de Anda (*newspaper publisher*), Leo Villanueva (*justice of the peace*), Carlos Poulliot (*defense attorney*), Patricia María (*mother of youth*), Flor Rodríguez (*Marisela, saleswoman*), Gerardo Zepeda (*El Nene*), Luis Guevara & Blanca Lidia Muñoz (*Alma's neighbours*), José Ezqueso (*judge*), Elías Rivera (*Jeniffer's brother*), Raúl Mayoral (*policeman*), Manuel Tejada (*prisoner*), Rodrigo Trujillo S. (*Rodrigo*), Agustín Bernal (*Gómez*), Carlos Rotzinger (*Laura's father*), Luis Alberto Cano (*karate instructor*), Valentín Trujillo S. (*Valentín*), Jesús Ruiz (*messenger*), Gabriela del Valle (*model*), Julio Monje (*father of youth*)



Notes: although not a sleazy exploitation film, *Violación* falls short of being a strong denunciation of rape and the criminal justice system in Mexico (which it apparently wants to be), largely due to an unfocused script and some poor directorial choices. Still, there is some social commentary and there are other admirable aspects of the picture which make it more than a failure (if less than a truly fine movie).

Alma is accosted by three criminals--Irak, El Nene, and El Borrego--who force her to take them to her apartment. Irak beats and rapes her while his accomplices rob. Alma's upstairs neighbour, reporter José, suspects something. He breaks into the apartment and photographs the three men in the act, narrowly escaping with his life. The police arrest the trio, but Alma is psychologically brutalised by the unfeeling magistrate and medical examiner, who indicate there isn't enough evidence to charge the men with rape. Irak and the others are released on bail; Alma, who had confessed to José that she'd been raped in high school and was stigmatised as a result, leaves town. José feels guilty that he'd promised Alma justice,

and writes a scathing article about the failure of the system in his paper (the real-life "El Heraldo"). José later marries his girlfriend Laura.

A vengeful Irak attacks Jenny, an employee of the newspaper and the fiancée of Sancho, José's assistant. She fights back fiercely, but finally despairs of escape or rescue and leaps to her death from her apartment window. A grieving Sancho later accompanies José on a police operation to capture some smugglers and is shot to death by the criminals.

While José is covering this story, Irak breaks into Laura's house and rapes her. José returns in time to help capture the rapist. However, Irak claims Laura invited him to her home and demanded rough sex: he produces a photo of them together (taken in a mall where Laura is a model) and another, inscribed photo (stolen from José's apartment) as proof of a preexisting relationship. He's acquitted of rape and assault charges.

José tracks Irak to the latter's home in Cuernavaca. After a running gun battle (in which Irak, somewhat

hilariously, guns down numerous innocent bystanders for no particular reason), José confronts the man on a rooftop and shoots him in the groin, then leaves. Irak commits suicide. A printed title says José was sentenced to 5 years in prison.



If the criminal justice system in Mexico is truly as it is presented in *Violación*, then it's no surprise that (as a printed epilogue states), there's a rape every 9 minutes in Mexico. Irak skates on rape charges twice--both times on shaky grounds (his victims still sport major facial bruises from his beatings), although this might be chalked up to dramatic license--but somehow his other crimes (robbery, attempted murder of José--twice!--and the assault on Laura's maid Agustina) are all glossed over. José finally declares he's fed up with the law--"society is more rotten than I could imagine," he says earlier in the movie--and well he might be!

There are some other loose ends which aren't serious, but are mildly annoying. Irak and his henchmen follow Alma home from work, but it's not clear if they deliberately chose her as a victim or not. She's not wealthy, she was only working late that night because a co-worker had family problems, and when Alma's car is finally forced to stop by Irak's vehicle, they ask "Where do you live?" Unfortunately for her, she says "right here," and they all go in. What if she had pulled over in front of a police station? What if she was married to a cop and her husband was waiting in the apartment?

The film makes a big point of Jenny having six different locks on her apartment door (in fact, her inability to unlock them quickly prevents her from escaping from Irak--irony!), but Irak merely comes in through a balcony. How did he get there? She lives on the ninth floor! (After

she jumps to her death, there is a long panning shot down to the street to reinforce this.)

One major flaw in *Violación* is the unfortunate (and in at least one case, deliberate) juxtaposition of "funny" scenes with grim, dramatic ones. As Alma is giving her tearful testimony to a hostile, lecherous agent of the Ministerio Público, we're treated to shots of a flustered Sancho trying to deal with a malfunctioning coffee urn. In the middle of the movie, there are other examples of tone-deafness:

Sancho chases Jenny around her apartment, demanding (and/or begging for) sex. She insists she wants to wait until marriage. Sancho grabs her and she resists firmly: this isn't flirting, she is not interested and yet the scene is played entirely for laughs and goes on for a long time. Shortly afterwards, there's a "funny" scene of José



repeatedly bribing a justice of the peace to perform a spontaneous wedding between José and Laura. They then return to her house for their honeymoon night, a romantic scene of them making out before the fireplace...which is intercut with Irak's horrific and prolonged attack on Jenny! What th--?!

This is doubly unfortunate, because the scene between Irak and Jenny is genuinely suspenseful and well-done. Irak breaks into Jenny's apartment and, seeing she's in the shower, calmly sits down to wait, smoking a cigarette and putting his headphones on his ears (a repeated motif--it's never clear what he's listening to as he assaults women). Jenny emerges from the shower, spots him, and slams the bathroom door. He breaks in, she throws perfume in his eyes. He punches her in the stomach, she knees him in the groin; he punches her again, she claws his face, then grabs his groin and squeezes, hard. Then, seeing no way out, she leaps to her death. Claudia Guzmán is really excellent here, conveying absolute terror and desperation throughout the scene. A petite woman to begin with, she's dwarfed by the tall and fearsome Eleazar García Jr., dressed all in black and sporting his usual Wally Walrus moustache.

Violación has its heart in the right place, at least. None of the rapes is depicted in any sort of exploitative way--all three actresses appear partially nude, but this is at least more realistic than movie rapes where the victim remains fully clothed--and the brutality of the assault and the terror

and pain of the women is effectively on display. The aftermath of the assault is also portrayed as an additional ordeal. Alma faces a leering magistrate, then undergoes a painful and embarrassing medical examination that ultimately concludes there's "not enough evidence" to charge Irak with rape. Earlier, Alma told José of how she lost friends when she brought rape charges earlier, got obscene phone calls, and had to repeatedly move in an attempt to escape her soiled reputation. A depressed Laura retreats to a cabin in the woods after her rape; her father says she doesn't want to see José or any man, "even me, her father."

The film also criticises the Mexican criminal justice system. The newspaper's lawyer (who's murdered, apparently by Irak, late in the movie), warns José that the laws aren't effective and that José will face charges if he tries to get revenge. There is a reference to asking "Senator Noriega" to propose new legislation, but this goes nowhere. As noted above, the primary representatives of the law--the *agente* of the Ministerio Público, the doctor, the justice of the peace, and the judge at Irak's trial for raping Laura--are not presented in a favourable manner at all. There is even an oblique reference to government control of the press: José's publisher, reacting to José's outraged article following Alma's rape, asks his reporter if he wants the newspaper shut down, or its newsprint allocation cut (actions taken in real life against newspapers critical of the government of the moment).

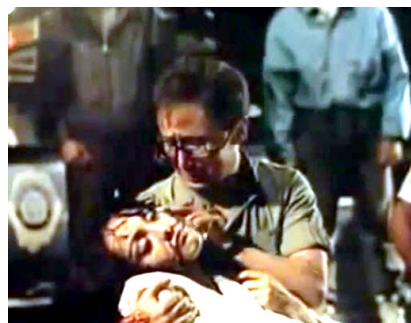
The rapist in *Violación* is personalised to a certain extent but essentially he's just a monster who viciously beats and rapes his victims. It's curious that he's initially shown with two henchmen--his paid employees, it develops--since they don't serve any real purpose (except to lead José to Irak at the end of the movie). They aren't involved in the rapes, and in fact both El Nene and El Borrego complain to Irak after his assault on Alma: El Nene quits and El Borrego has to be bribed with a double salary to continue assisting Irak in his activities (but the second two rapes in the film are done without his help anyway). The villain's name--"Irak" (his first lawyer calls him Señor Yazbek, another Middle Eastern name)--marks him as of foreign descent, but he's not given any outsider attributes. He looks and talks like a Mexican.

Violación starts off as if it is going to be a film about a socially-responsible journalist who crusades to change Mexico's laws and tries to improve the treatment of rape victims, but it swiftly changes direction and becomes a crime/revenge picture. One could argue that Irak dictated this by his actions (raping Jenny and Laura to get back at José), but this is a fictional movie and the script could have gone in any direction, had the filmmakers chosen to do so. The over-the-top shoot-out in Cuernavaca is completely out of place, even for a standard "revenge" film: it would have been more appropriate, tonally, for José to have confronted Irak without all of the collateral damage. At no point until this last scene is José presented as an "action hero" (he does kill the criminal who shoots Sancho, but this is an instinctive, immediate reaction).

The performances in *Violación* are solid throughout. Mario Almada, although second-billed for box-office purposes, doesn't appear until the 58-minute mark (of a 93-minute movie) and has only a couple of scenes. As mentioned above, all three of the main female performers--Olivia Collins, Claudia Guzmán, and María Fernanda García--have to endure grueling rape scenes, and do so with considerable skill and dignity. García is also notable in her post-rape footage, making a powerful statement about how rape victims are abused a second time by the authorities and by society.

Valentín Trujillo is fine, only reverting to "action star" mode at the conclusion. Otherwise, he makes José seem like a decent, caring individual. Rodolfo Rodríguez gained

fame on the 1980s TV series "Cachún cachún ra ra!" as both writer and performer. Although he made a number of film appearances, most of his post-"Cachún" career was spent in the theatre (he died in



1994). While Rodríguez is mostly annoying comic relief for two-thirds of *Violación*, he redeems himself somewhat with a brief but heartfelt scene after Jenny's death, as he cradles her bloody corpse (and then gets killed off fairly soon afterwards).

Carlos East, as happened in a fair number of his later films, had his dialogue post-dubbed (by Bruno Rey?), for reasons unknown to me, but he is satisfactory as the dispassionate medical examiner who brusquely examines Alma: he's cold and clinical, rather than sympathetic and understanding. Miguel Manzano has a substantial role as the newspaper's lawyer, and it's amusing to see Valentín Trujillo's then-wife Patricia María and their two sons in minor parts. María Luisa Alcalá has a small part as Laura's semi-ditsy servant (getting shockingly punched by Irak when he invades Laura's house).

Production values are fine. Presumably everything was shot on location, but the cinematography and sound recording are professional. The music score is variable, but one wouldn't necessarily blame composer Diego Herrera for the choice of cheesy "comedy" music for certain scenes.



THE MEXICAN FILM

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