

# The Mexican Film Bulletin

## HALLOWEEN ISSUE 2021

### ANNUAL HALLOWEEN ISSUE!

This issue includes the 2021 Ariel Awards results, as well as obituaries for, unfortunately, a large number of individuals who worked in the *cine nacional*. But first, our annual reviews of fantasy (and related) films!



### LOST & FOUND: EL MONJE LOCO



#### El Monje Loco Episodio 1: La herencia negra

[The Mad Monk Episode 1: The Black Inheritance] *Dir-Scr:* Alejandro Galindo; *Orig. Idea:* Carlos Riveroll del Prado; *Photo:* Gabriel Figueroa; *Music:* Carlos Riveroll del Prado; *Musical Performance:* M. Enríquez; *Asst Dir:* Miguel M. Delgado; *Art Dir:* Manuel Fontanals; *Sound:* Douglas Winne

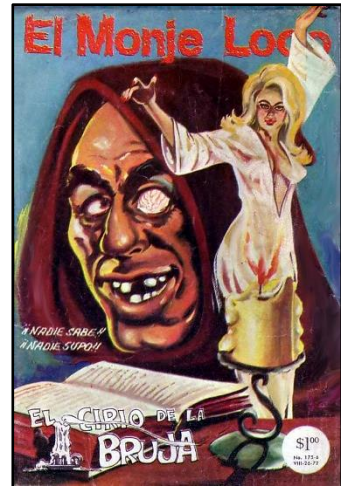
**Cast:** Alejandro Cobo (*Julio Legaspe*), Lucille [Bowling] (*Elisa*), Agustín Melgarejo (*Fabio*), Paz Villegas (*doña Claudia*), Salvador Carrasco (*El Monje Loco*)

**Notes:** “El Monje Loco” began “life” in 1937 as the host of a radio series on the powerful XEW station in Mexico. Salvador Carrasco played the eponymous

narrator, who introduced tales of mystery and horror with the words: “No one knows, no one knew...the truth about the horrible case of [whatever]!” then laughing maniacally as he played the pipe organ. The character was brought to Mexican comic books in 1940, appearing in “Chamaco Chico,” with stories by Carlos Riveroll del Prado (who wrote the radio scripts) and art by Juan Reyes Bolaños “Beiker.” The Monje Loco is one of the earliest “horror hosts” in media, and while it’s unclear if the character directly inspired EC’s “Crypt Keeper” and “Vault-Keeper,” there are certainly similarities. “Monje Loco” comic stories later appeared in the Fifties, Sixties, Seventies, and Eighties (as well as imitations such as “El Monje Místico”).

The first film appearance of the character—played on-screen by Salvador Carrasco—came in 1940. Alejandro Galindo shot a series of six 30-minute “episodes”—*La herencia negra* [The Black Inheritance], *El horrible caso de las manos cortadas* [The Horrible Case of the Severed Hands], *La gárgola humana* [The Human Gargoyle], *El Cristo justiciero* [The Avenging Christ Figure], *El pacto con el demonio* [Pact with the Devil] and *La reincarnación de Vilma Bordoni* [The Reincarnation of Vilma Bordoni]. For many years these films were considered lost, but in 2013, the Filmoteca de la UNAM announced it was restoring several episodes which had been discovered. I have obtained a copy of the first episode only.

One unusual aspect of the film is that it has no dialogue—the entire story is narrated by the Monje Loco, who appears on-screen at the beginning and end of the



episode, and periodically throughout. The Monje, played by Salvador Carrasco, doesn't have the "dead eye" the character was sometimes given, but he does have a giant tooth and plays a pipe organ while cackling madly.

In the 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Doña Claudia is a wealthy spinster who spends her money helping the less fortunate. Her niece Elisa marries Julio, and they scheme together



to gain control of doña Claudia's fortune: they daub poison on the pages of the devout woman's prayer book, knowing her habit of licking her finger as she turns the pages. Once doña Claudia is dead, Julio and Elisa anticipate receiving their inheritance, but are shocked to learn the money will only go to the surviving member of the couple. There is also one more codicil to the will, but it won't be revealed until Elisa or Julio is dead.

Elisa and Julio become suspicious of each other. Julio finally wins the silent struggle by inserting a poison in a candle in his wife's bedroom (they sleep separately), which kills her as she sleeps. Julio thinks he's home free, but the lawyer reads the final part of the will: the surviving spouse will only inherit if there was a child of the marriage. Otherwise, doña Claudia's money goes to charity. Julio goes mad.



The lack of dialogue in *La herencia negra* doesn't really harm the film—Salvador Carrasco's sinister-humorous narration is amusing and it's difficult to imagine this story playing out with "normal" dialogue, especially for 30 minutes, which is too long for the amount of plot. The last two-thirds of the film have a lot of shots of Julio and Elisa simply staring at each other suspiciously.

The production values are satisfactory. The main cast is small—two main characters and three supporting roles, plus a handful of others who appear briefly. The sets and costumes are fine.

Why the "Monje Loco" film series was created in this 3-reel format is unknown. There was a bit of experimentation in Mexican cinema in the 1940s—the

multi-part serial *Los calaveras del terror* was another rarity—but "episodes" would not return until the 1950s, when the Estudios América, affiliated with the STIC union that was prohibited from making feature films, opened. Most of the episodes made at América were conceived to be combined into features, i.e., they were never intended to be shown separately, but there were a handful of standalone shorts as well (most of these also eventually spliced together into features).



The Monje Loco reappeared in the cinema a few times in later years. Salvador Carrasco (credited just as "El Monje Loco") had a cameo role in *Mátenme porque me muero!!* (1951), as a man who misses out on the chance to buy a winning lottery ticket, and goes "loco," complete

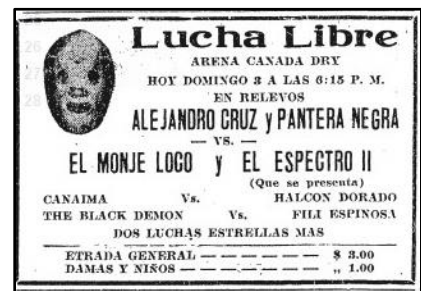
with his "Nadie sabe...nadie supo" catch-phrase. Carrasco—also credited with writing some "Monje Loco" stories in the comic books--died in 1972. *Leyendas*



*macabras de la colonia* (1973) brought the Monje Loco character back to the cinema (with the credited permission of Carrasco's widow), featuring an unidentified actor in the role. For some mysterious reason, the Monje appears in only one brief scene in the middle of the picture—playing a pipe organ and cackling madly, as usual—but does not introduce or narrate the movie otherwise.

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

The Monje Loco remains a popular culture icon. There have been a number of *luchadores* using the name, from at least the



'50s through the 2000s (not all of them necessarily imitating the look of the radio/comics character, despite the name). In 1992, the musical group "Mister Chivo"



recorded a song entitled “Mi amigo el Monje Loco” (there were several previous songs/groups titled “El Monje



Loco” but it’s not entirely clear what their inspiration was). In the late 1990s comedian Eugenio Derbez parodied the Monje Loco on his TV series “Derbez en Cuando.” The “Lonje Moco,” portrayed by Derbez in heavy makeup, tries to tell tales of terror but gets confused, forgets what he intended to say, and otherwise botches the job. There’s even a famous sandwich shop in

Mexico City (there’s one in Los Angeles as well) called “El Monje Loco!”

Portions of this appeared in MFB 20/5 Sept-Oct 2014



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

Videograbaciones-Julio Aldama, 1984) *Exec Prod:* José Luis Yeo; *Dir:* Julio Aldama; *Scr:* Rafael Portillo,



Roberto G. Rivera; *Prod Mgr:* Jorge Aguado Bazna

**Cast:** Julio Aldama (*José Martínez*), Julio Augurio (*Martín Liceaga*), Luz María Rico (*Carmen*), Queta Lavat (*doña Susana*), Paco Pharrez (*Padre Superior*), “Yeo el Mago” [José Luis Yeo] (? *Monje Loco*), Raymundo Fuentes “Tilico,” Jorge Aldama (*Alejandro*), Francisco Águila

Ávila, Alfonso Allison, Daniel Jiménez, María de la Sierra (*doña María*), Lucha y Jorge (*singers*)

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

adaptations of stories from the “Monje Loco” comic books and/or radio programs.

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



a monk, but when he encounters the young and beautiful Carmen—a childhood acquaintance, now all grown up—he starts to question his religious vocation. Carmen likes Martín as a friend and a spiritual advisor, but has no

romantic interest in him. She’s also engaged to marry another man. Martín finally snaps and chases her lustfully to the top of the monastery, from which she falls to her death. Martín has visions of her ghost and decides to kill himself so he can join her in the afterlife. God [in voiceover] condemns Martín to wander the Earth for eternity--witnessing endless scenes of human suffering and sin--until he truly repents. Martín apparently undergoes a Jekyll-and-Hyde transformation: he wanders off-screen in torment, then there’s a cut to the Monje Loco (ping-pong ball eye, mostly-toothless) laughing madly and playing the organ. [The Monje Loco is played by someone else, probably El Mago Yeo—the film’s producer-- but is presumably supposed to be the cursed Martín.]



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



leaves the *Cristo* with the local druggist in exchange for some medicine.

Later, José asks the local *brujo* for an amulet, which strongly resembles a 3-tined, wooden salad server. Each tine represents a wish, but every wish must be paid for with...dun dun DUN...a death. José wishes for money to pay the mortgage—Alejandro is killed in an accident and “coincidentally” the insurance money is exactly the amount needed to save the farm. José’s wife is distraught at her son’s death, and José wishes him back again (oddly enough, there’s no mention of whose “death” pays for this

wish). Alejandro comes back, but as a zombie whose face is half falling-off. José uses the salad fork's third and final wish to get rid of his undead son, and then he (José) drops dead.

This second story is obviously a re-telling of "The Monkey's Paw," which had previously been adapted by Mexican cinema as *Espiritismo*. The Monje Loco appears sporadically throughout the episode, playing his



organ, commenting on the plot (and, as noted, taking an active if brief part in it himself), and laughing maniacally. These scenes are actually not too bad (at least they're diverting), particularly compared to the "dramatic" plot.

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

Although only 76 minutes long and glacially paced, *El*



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

Julio Aldama began his career as a leading man—usually in Westerns and *rancheras*, although he did play major roles in two of Luis Alcoriza's early efforts, *Tiburoneros* and *Tlayucan*—then moved into character and "heavy" parts and also started directing. Julio Augurio is Aldama's son (after his father's death, he changed his professional name to "Julio Aldama Jr."), as is Jorge Aldama. Their performances are adequate, as are most of the supporting performers, although Luz María Rico is stiff and awkward as Carmen (which is odd, since she wasn't a novice actress, having been in various films before this).

Reprinted from MFB 20/5 (2014)



## SUPER-COMEDIANS

**El Super Macho\*** [The Super Macho Man]

(Cinematográfica Intercontinental, 1958) *Exec Prod*: Jorge de la Vega; *Prod*: Raúl de Anda [uncredited]; *Dir*: Alejandro Galindo; *Scr Adapt*: Francisco Córdova, Raúl de Anda; *Story*: Rafael García Travesí; *Photo*: Rosalío

Solano; *Music*: Sergio Guerrero; *Prod Mgr*: José L. Murillo; *Prod Chief*: Julio G[uerrero] Tello; *Sub-Dir*: Jesús Marín; *Film Ed*: Carlos Savage; *Art Dir*: [Fco.] Marco G. Chilet; *Makeup*: María del Castillo; *Caricatures on credits*: Guillmanj; *Union*: STPC; *Sound Ed*: Teodulo Bustos; *Dialog Rec*: Francisco Alcayde; *Re-rec*: Galdino Samperio; *Music Rec*: Sergio Guerrero; *Spec FX*: José Benavides; *Studio*: Churubusco-Azteca; Mexiscope; Eastmancolor\*\*

\* The on-screen title has "Super Macho" as two words, but posters show it as a single word

\*\*current prints are in black-and-white



**Cast**: Manuel "Loco" Valdés [spelled "Valdez" on the credits] *Melitón Popoca*, Sonia Furió (*Marianela Menocal*), Teresa Velázquez (*Alicia Riverol*), Óscar Pulido (*Arístides Fabio*), Sergio Barrios (*Agustín Ferrara*), "Borolas" [Joaquín García Vargas] (*Sansón*), "Vitola" [Famie Kaufman] (*Petra*), "Cachito"\*\*\* (*Cachito*), Lucy Fabery (*Puerto Rican singer*), Wilson Viana\*\*, Kippy Casado (*singer*), José L. Caro ("Venezuelan" *singer*), José Loza (*student*), León Barroso (*announcer*), Fellove, Richard Lemus (*band leader*)

\*\*\*some sources credit Wilson Viana as "Cachito," but Cachito and Viana are listed separately in the on-screen credits. Viana appears in the final sequence as a Brazilian singer.

**Notes**: as I mentioned in my review of 1957's *El super-flaco* (MFB 21/5, Halloween issue 2015):

A repeated plot premise in Fifties Mexican cinema was "comedian gets miraculous physical/mental powers, hilarity results." Examples include *Resortes* (*El beisbolista fenómeno*, *El luchador fenómeno*), Clavillazo (*Una movida chueca*), Tin Tan (*El Gato sin botas*—in this one, Tin Tan just thinks he has super-powers), Loco Valdés (*El supermacho*) and Pompín Iglesias (*El Super-flaco*). [This motif would occasionally recur in later years,



as in the Capulina vehicles *Capulina corazón de león* and *El naco más naco*. ]

*El Super Macho* was difficult to see until recently, and turns out to be rather disappointing. Loco Valdés doesn't get "super" strength until very late in the film, and does almost nothing with it. The film itself is a real mess in many ways.



Melitón and Sansón are waiters in a restaurant that caters to university students. Melitón has a crush on Marianela, but she's interested in student athlete Agustín. Marianela's rival for his affections is Alicia. Jealous of Alicia, Marianela tells Melitón she could only fall for a man who's a great athlete like Agustín, and urges Melitón to participate in the upcoming sports competition if he wants to win her affection.

Melitón delivers breakfast each day to mad scientist Arístides Fabio. Arístides has a machine that can "improve" human beings. He has an ape-man named "Cachito" in a cage (at the end of the movie, Cachito reverts to being a chimpanzee), but really wants to experiment on the diminutive Sansón and make him tall. Sansón isn't interested. Arístides says he can make



Melitón a great athlete but Melitón has to deliver Sansón to the lab. He gives Melitón a little cap with antenna sticking out—he'll transmit atomic strength-waves via long-distance so Melitón can excel at the games.

However, Arístides doesn't keep his promise: he sends remote-control strength to Melitón to participate in the hammer throw, then gets distracted. Melitón fails at the javelin and pole vault. The final event is swimming:



Marianela kisses Melitón and he is inspired to win the event, without external super-powers.

Meanwhile, Arístides uses his machine to turn gawky waitress Petra into a beautiful woman, but Sansón continues to elude him.



Cachito is smitten with the "new" Petra and breaks out of his cage. A melee results, the lab blows up, Cachito reverts to being a chimpanzee and Petra resumes her former appearance.

The "students" reunite at the restaurant where a variety of musical acts representing different countries perform. Marianela and Melitón pair off, as do Alicia and Agustín (and Sansón and Petra). The end.

Loco Valdés runs through his entire repertoire of grimaces, twitches, odd noises, etc., and most of the time is annoying rather than amusing or sympathetic. The film gives the other comic actors—notably Óscar Pulido, but also Borolas and Vitola—a lot of screen time, with only occasional positive results. Everyone seems to have been ad-libbing, vamping for as long as possible, without much concern for things like "plot," or "characters." The "straight" performers—Sonia Furió, Sergio Barrios, and Tere Velázquez—are not much better served. Furió gets a couple of musical numbers and looks pretty great, but Barrios is a thin stereotype and Tere Velázquez has almost no dialogue and looks and acts very oddly as she fawns over Barrios' character.

The whole concept of Valdés getting super-strength is wasted, and audiences expecting to see something along these lines (based on the film’s title and advertising) might have felt cheated. *El super-flaco* isn’t a great film, but at least the protagonist actually does get super-strength and uses it for a significant part of the picture’s running time. The other aspects of Aristides’ invention had potential, but are also under-used: Cachito does almost nothing, and while the “new” Petra is extremely beautiful (I don’t know who the actress is that plays her—she may have been a model or even an amateur), she appears only briefly.



The production values of *El super macho* aren’t bad. A significant portion of the film was shot at the relatively new Ciudad Universitaria, including the large stadium and swimming facilities. It’s unclear what sort of sporting event was actually going on—a parade of nations suggests it’s something like the Pan-American Games (Mexico hosted the 1955 event, but that was a bit early to be the event shown in this film, one would think)—but in the context of the film it’s allegedly some sort of student competition (even Marianela and Alicia participate in women’s diving). To confuse matters even further, there are “Olympic rings” as part of the décor in the café in the final sequence. To the film’s credit, the athletic contest scenes with Agustín and Melitón are well-integrated into the actual footage, either shot at the same time and/or in the same location with lots of extras. The rest of the action unfolds on just a handful of sets, mostly the restaurant and Aristides’ laboratory. The film was shot in Eastmancolor and publicity stills look nice and bright. There is one “fantasy” musical number set in a Mexicanised version of Olympus, but this is the familiar “empty set with a few props and dry-ice fog” that appears in a number of Mexican musicals of the era.

There is a curious discrepancy about the length of the movie: García Riera cites a running time of 70 minutes,

but the copy I have is 82 minutes, which seems more reasonable.

A few interesting bits, but quite disjointed and ultimately disappointing.



**Capulina corazón de león** [Capulina the Lion-Hearted] (Panorama Films-Prods. Zacarías, 1968) *Admin. General of Prod:* Anuar Badín Zacarías; *Dir:* Miguel Zacarías; *Scr:* Alfredo Zacarías; *Photo:* Rosalío Solano; *Music:* Manuel Esperón; *Prod Mgr:* José Llamas Ultreras; *Prod Chief:* Fidel Pizarro; *Asst Dir:* Julio Cahero; *Film Ed:* Gloria Schoemann; *Art Dir:* F. Marco Chilet; *Décor:* Pablo Galván; *Camera Op:* Ignacio Romero; *Lighting:* Antonio Solano; *Sound Ed:* José Li-Ho; *Dialog Rec:* Manuel Topete; *Re-rec:* Galdino Samperio; *Spec FX:* Ricardo Sainz; *Animal Trainers:* Hnos. Gurza & Rafael Díaz Leonelli; *Makeup:* Rosa Guerrero; *Studio:* Churubusco; *Union:* STPC

**Cast:** Gaspar Henaine “Capulina” (*Capulina*), Erna Martha Baumann (*María Luisa*), *nieces:* América Ramírez, Rosita & Pili González; Antonio Raxel (*Dr. Barnard, veterinarian*), Jorge Arvizu (*second veterinarian*), Mario García “Harapos” (*friendly convict*), Celia Viveros (*neighbour*), Nothanael León Moreno “Frankenstein” (*bald robber*), Juan Salazar Garza (*robber “Querubín”*), Consuelo Monteagudo (*pet department employee*), Eduardo Alcaraz (*zoo director*), Julián de Meriche (*pharmacist*), Ma. Antonieta Olvera, Adolfo Magaldi, Jorge Casanova (*zoo guard*), Guillermo Álvarez



Bianchi (*landlord*), Armando Gutiérrez (*Colonel, prison warden*), Carl-Hillos (*wedding photographer*)

**Notes:** after breaking up with his partner Viruta (Marco Antonio Campos), Capulina didn't miss a beat, embarking on a solo career that spanned more than 30 years, nearly 30 feature films, several television series, live performances (including his own circus), etc. While the Capulina films have their good points—quite a few of them have fantasy aspects, and almost all of them feature extremely attractive leading actresses (Erna Martha Baumann, Jacqueline Andere, Rosalba Brambila, Gloriella, Angélica Chaín, Jacqueline Voltaire, Rossy Mendoza, Alicia Encinas, Lina Marín, etc.)—they're not objectively good films. The Capulina-Viruta movies had actual scripts, with plots and characters, but the Capulina solo pictures have a “premise” and “scenes,” and these are elaborated in such a lazy fashion that the entertainment value is quite low.



For example, as *Capulina corazón de león* opens, Capulina tries to convince his three young “nieces” to go to bed, so he and his girlfriend María Luisa can go to the movies. This sequence lasts more than six minutes (including a “story,” a song, and a pillow fight), and takes place almost entirely on a tiny set (the girls’ bedroom) about 10 feet wide. It includes a 2-minute long-take consisting of Capulina and the 3 girls just goofing around in front of a stationary camera. This sequence isn’t funny, and doesn’t even do a good job of establishing the characters or the situation: apparently, the three girls are actually María Luisa’s nieces (since they live with her), and calling Capulina *tío* is just an honorary title. Capulina’s relationship with María Luisa is unclear for quite some time—is she his sister? His wife? His girlfriend? (as unlikely as the latter two would seem)—until eventually (much later) he calls her his *novia*. There’s a brief dialogue reference to the girls’ desire to have a dog (which, amazing, does lead to something later) and two times during the rough-housing we see Capulina

grab his chest, which you might think would be foreshadowing his later near-fatal heart attack, except no one says anything at this point. It’s never brought up again and thus his subsequent collapse seemingly comes out of nowhere.

The rest of the film is an assembly of similar “comic” set-pieces (Capulina is bullied by some thugs, Capulina in the pet department of the Gigante store, Capulina is robbed, Capulina [actually, his double] plays around with his lion, etc.) that seem to have been minimally “scripted” and mostly improvised. It’s a bit of a shock to see the name of famed Miguel Zacarías as the director of *Capulina corazón de león*. The best days of Zacarías were behind him (he’d actually previously directed one Capulina-Viruta picture, *Los astronautas*, which wasn’t bad—and coincidentally, also featured Erna Martha Baumann), and other once-decent directors would also make mediocre Capulina vehicles (Miguel Morayta, Gilberto Martínez Solares, René Cardona Sr.), along with Alfredo Zacarías, who wrote or co-wrote the majority of Capulina’s solo pictures.

In addition to the lazy scenes mentioned above, there are a couple of production gaffes. For instance, the sequence in which Harapos demands Capulina assist him in recovering stolen bank money takes place in the daytime, but there’s one jarring shot filmed at night: clearly a bit more “coverage” was needed for the original sequence, so they did the pickup shot at a later time, when they returned to the zoo to film actual night scenes. Also, Capulina has three nieces, but the oldest is not abducted by the criminals, and there’s no mention of where she is while her sisters are being held hostage (she does reappear at the end of the movie, however).

The film was extremely topical in one aspect: the theme of heart transplants. In January 1964, a chimpanzee heart was transplanted into a human being; the heart continued to beat for a time, but the recipient died without regaining consciousness. In December 1967, Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the first human-to-human heart transplant in South Africa, and another operation followed in January 1968. *Capulina corazón de león* went into production in April 1968, and *El horripilante bestia humana* (in which a gorilla’s heart is transplanted into a human body) started shooting in May 1968. Both of these films were clearly influenced by Barnard’s operations (and in fact one of the surgeons in *Capulina corazón de león* is named “Barnard”), although for comedic and horrific purposes, respectively, the transplant donors are animals rather than humans, and the recipient takes on attributes of the non-human donor.

[In the fall of 1968, Alfredo Zacarías wrote (and in this case, also directed) another film in which Capulina is

embued with super-powers, *Capulina Speedy González* (eating chili peppers gives him super-speed).]

The mild-mannered Capulina promises his sweetheart María Luisa’s nieces a dog, but can’t afford one at the (real-life) Gigante department store. While temporarily



manning the pet department, he accepts a mysterious “sick animal” in a basket—it’s a lion cub. He nurses it back to health, it grows to adulthood, and is very tame. Capulina names it Mastuerzo (roughly,

“oaf”). However, one cannot keep a pet lion in Mexico City, and it’s taken away from him and put in a zoo. Capulina sneaks in to the zoo at night to free his pet, but Mastuerzo has been moved to another area and Capulina is confronted by ill-tempered lion Emperador. Emperador falls into the (dry) moat and is mortally injured; Capulina climbs out of the enclosure but suffers a heart attack.

Taken to the zoo veterinarians’ clinic, Capulina is dying but the two wacky doctors transplant Emperador’s heart into Capulina’s chest (surprisingly, both hearts are clearly shown, with the lion’s being quite large). The next day Capulina has apparently made a remarkable recovery, and is sent to prison (on what charge? What about a trial?). He’s befriended by a bank robber, then discovers two thugs who’d robbed him on the street some



time before are also prisoners. However, Capulina responds to their abuse by roaring like a lion and defeating more than a dozen tough convicts, and is

established as the new prison boss. He compels the prisoners to scrub the yard and play children’s games; the suspicious warden releases him! Capulina is hired as a zookeeper; he enjoys the work but is miffed when Mastuerzo—who now has a mate—snubs him.

After being absent for the entire middle section of the movie, María Luisa and the nieces suddenly reappear. The bank robber from prison has been released, and he says the stolen money is hidden in the zoo (convenient for the film’s plot, but it’s not explained how this occurred); Capulina refuses to help him retrieve it. The robber teams

up with the two thugs (who’ve also mysteriously been released from prison) and kidnap two of María Luisa’s nieces to force Capulina to cooperate. Capulina retrieves the money from the lion enclosure, then uses his lion-strength to defeat the three criminals. As the film concludes, Mastuerzo and his mate have some new lion cubs, and Capulina kisses María Luisa.

The scenes featuring “Mastuerzo” (actually a lion named Kimba) are fascinating to watch. Capulina never appears\* with the grown lion—he’s doubled by someone else (who isn’t quite as plump as Capulina, but does a fine



job of hiding his face from the camera), presumably one of the Gurza brothers (well-known animal trainers who later worked on the Chanoc films) or Rafael Díaz Leonelli (later owner of the

Royal Palace Circus). Otherwise, the shots are framed so either Capulina or the lion is seen, but not both of them. To give credit where credit is due, this is professionally done.

\*[There is one shot of Capulina standing next to the lion inside a church—if this is an optical effect, it’s an excellent one.] In one sequence, Capulina strolls down a street with Mastuerzo on a chain-leash, and the reaction of passers-by is quite effective (people can also be seen peeping out of their windows at the spectacle). The lion is “tame” and acts affectionately with its trainer, but in several scenes it roars or lunges angrily at other people.

Capulina does interact with other, real zoo animals when he’s working as a zookeeper—he feeds giraffes, polar bears, and seals, and scrubs an elephant’s head. In some of these scenes he’s observed by crowds of zoo visitors serving as unpaid extras on the shoot. Capulina even gets in a good joke or two (María Luisa hands him the ransom note after her nieces are abducted; Capulina hems and haws and then hands it back to her to read—even though he’s earlier clearly shown to be literate—saying “the handwriting is very bad”), in addition to his standard shtick of comic grimaces.

*Capulina corazón de león* provides no real back-story for Capulina. Does he have a job? Apparently not, but he has enough money to rent an apartment (not as nice as the one María Luisa and the nieces live in, though) and (later) to buy food for Mastuerzo. He’s apparently supposed to



be a very meek person, but this is never really established. In one scene, he's set upon by a half-dozen young hooligans, who toss knives at him for fun (until they're chased away by María Luisa and the nieces wielding brooms); he's later robbed on the street, but in neither case is he overtly depicted as a coward. Towards the end of the picture, the street gang assaults him again, but this time Capulina uses his lion-strength to defeat them all (María Luisa and the nieces were once more prepared to come to his aid, but are proud of him when he displays his new, violent nature). Capulina does a good job in his (three) scenes of lion-inspired violence, and there are several other minor bits of characterisation—María Luisa offers him hot chocolate after he defeats the street gang, but he shouts "I want RAW MEAT," and we later see him devouring a lot of meat and drinking large quantities of milk—but this aspect of the plot could have been exploited more extensively (he doesn't get the heart transplant until more than half-way through the picture).



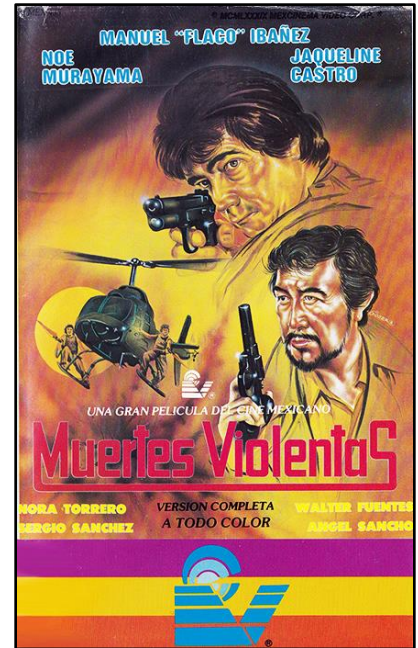
As noted, Erna Martha Baumann (as María Luisa) is off-screen for the middle of picture, and has only a few scenes in the beginning and end. Baumann, "Señorita México" of 1956, had a relatively brief screen career (although her appearances in a number of horror movies—*El mundo de los vampiros*, *El vampiro sangriento*, *La invasión de los vampiros*—have made her something of a cult figure) and had been off-screen for some years before returning for 3 films in 1968 and one in 1970. She's quite attractive but not really distinctive and her role in *Capulina corazón de león* could have been played by almost any actress of her general age and appearance. The rest of the cast is sprinkled with veteran performers but no one makes much of an impression.

Despite a number of flaws, *Capulina corazón de león* is mildly entertaining, and at 80 minutes it doesn't wear out its welcome.



## ANTHOLOGIES

**Muertes violentas** [Violent Deaths] (MexCinema Video Corp.—Miguel Ángel Martínez S., ©1989) *Exec Prod:* Patricia I. Fuentes; *Prod:* Miguel Ángel Martínez; *Dir:* Miguel Marte; *Scr:* Miguel Marte, Patricia I. Fuentes; *Photo:* Javier Cruz Jr.; *Prod Mgr:* Patricia I. Fuentes; *Asst Dir:* Ma. Aurora Martínez; *Film Ed:* Sigfrido García Jr.; *Lighting:* Alfredo Aguilar; *Sound Engin:* Fernando Bidart; *Makeup:* Luz María Larragibel; *Spec FX:* José



Aguilera; *Cam Asst:* José Flores; *Sound/Re-rec:* Miguel Larragibel, Nacho Chiu

**Cast:** Manuel "Flaco" Ibáñez (*Asencio Martínez*), Noé Murayama (*Diego*), Abril Campillo [credited but does not appear], Jaqueline [sic] Castro (*Susana*), Nora Torrero (*Paulina*), Sergio Sánchez (*Cmdte.*), Ángel Sancho (*Armando Díaz*), Carlos Daniel, Lourdes Tapia (*Lourdes*), Claudio Rojo Rojo (*Javier*), Sergio Campillo, Claudia Fuentes, Walter Fuentes (*Albertico*), Alfredo Aguilar, José Flores, José Aguilera

**Notes:** it's difficult to imagine how this project came about. Perhaps Miguel Ángel Martínez had a contract to deliver a film and no feature-length screenplay was ready, so he and Patricia I. Fuentes whipped out three short scripts for an anthology. Or, given that anthology films were moderately popular in this era, maybe that was the idea from the beginning. However, *Muertes violentas* doesn't have a strong central thread connecting the 3 tales: the first two are conventional crime tales, while the third is a fantasy zombie story.

In the first story, a group of police agents surround a house where wanted criminal Asencio Martínez is located. The police commander has some unique ideas about carrying out a raid: he explicitly forbids his men to open fire unless he specifically orders them to shoot (apparently, not even in self-defense), and when he has the house surrounded, he decides to wait an hour before acting (a decision even one of his assistants finds

perplexing). Inside, Martínez and a prostitute are in bed; he swears he's in love with her. She replies that all of her clients say that, "then I go take a shower, and when I come out, they remember I'm just a prostitute." Martínez spins a long tale of how he murdered his best friend and partner Ramiro, fearing the other man was going to steal the proceeds of a recent robbery. He shot Ramiro from ambush and let him bleed to death, listening as his "friend" died slowly, raving about a woman he loved, named Susana. [Do you see where this is going?]

Suddenly, in direct contravention of their superior's orders, two of the policemen open fire on the house, even though they can't see anyone inside. Martínez shoots back, and compels the prostitute to help him. Using her as a human shield, the criminal rather easily escapes using a nearby auto, leaving the police fuming. When they are



safely away, Martínez resumes his assertions that he wants to marry the prostitute, but she shoots him in the head. As she leaves (with the bag of

stolen money), she says, "I'm Susana." No! What a shock! (Not) Apparently it's just a coincidence that Martínez was her client, and she wasn't aware he was Ramiro's killer until he confessed. At least, that's the impression we get.

This episode is terrible and boring in many ways, and yet professionally shot/edited and acted (at least, by Ibáñez and Castro—Sergio Sánchez is pretty bad, although his character is so stupid so perhaps that affects our reaction to him). At nearly 30 minutes in length, it's about 20 minutes too long.

The second story is shorter (about 24 minutes) and once again is reasonably slick in terms of filmmaking technique, and the acting is satisfactory, but it has an exceptionally dumb premise. Javier wants to marry Paulina, but her parents hate him. He convinces his father Diego to help him abduct Paulina—who, Javier is sure, would find being kidnaped "exciting"—and Paulina's parents would be relieved when she returns, a married woman. They don't bother to tell Paulina about the plan, and simply grab her off the street (putting on masks to hide their identities from passersby, although they don't bother to obscure the license plates on their VW Combi), taking her to their mountain cabin. Shockingly, Paulina is angry at this! She threatens to have them arrested, but has

a strange change of heart and agrees to forgive them if they all stay at the cabin for three days.

Over this period, Paulina flirts with Diego (a widower), and eventually Javier finds them kissing. Paulina compels the two men to play Russian Roulette for her



affections—after several rounds, it's Diego's turn and it's clear the bullet is in the chamber so he'll die.

Javier struggles with his father for the pistol, it goes off, and Paulina takes the bullet in her forehead. Irony! As the story ends, a jovial Javier and Diego head off for a beach vacation, leaving Paulina's remains roasting in the fireplace.

The central idea of this episode is so stupid that it boggles the mind. Why don't Paulina and Javier simply elope? (It's mildly suggested she's under-age—also, she might not really want to marry Javier) Why doesn't Javier tell her about his scheme? Instead, they violently seize her (in broad daylight, on a city street) and chloroform her (!), only revealing their "brilliant" plan when she regains consciousness in the cabin. Why Diego agrees to help Javier is also incomprehensible.

As noted above, the acting is better than this story deserves: Noé Murayama is fine, his son Claudio Rojo is adequate,



and Nora Torrero is decent as Paulina (she has a sort of crafty look about her anyway, and is believable as the manipulative "victim"). With some tweaks, this could have been a

clever tale, but it's just not good as is. [One trivia note: Paulina references the tabloid press reporting on her story, saying "ráptola, viólala y matóla" (abduct her, rape her, kill her)—"but not the last one, of course." This is the title of a play (and *videohome*) by Alejandro Licona, about tabloid crime reporting in Mexico.

Finally, the third episode (a tad longer than the other two) is an outright horror story! (To be fair, none of the video or DVD versions sell this film as a horror movie) A band of six bedraggled guerrillas (or mercenaries, or



freedom fighters, or something)--led by Armando--travels through a forest; they stop for a rest at a large, ruined colonial-era monastery. Albertico, one of the soldiers, wanders off and is possessed by an evil gust of wind, which converts him into a murderous zombie (with really nice makeup).

Albertico kills his first victim and leaves his weapon (a hatchet) buried in the man's head. When he attacks his second victim, he's got another hatchet (however, this guy



dies for no apparent reason, then snakes comes out of his stomach). Neither of these two men bothers to shoot the monster; it's not until Armando sees

Albertico that he opens fire, with little effect. Snakes start coming out of Armando, who then borrows Albertico's hatchet to chop himself to death! The fourth soldier gets his head smashed by Albertico. Lourdes, the only female member of the group, finds a book that "explains" the curse; she sprinkles holy water on her bullets and shoots Albertico to death. She walks away.

As with the other two episodes, this story is reasonably slick in terms of its camerawork and editing (although the sound on my version goes out of sync towards the end), and the acting is satisfactory. There's some philosophical



dialogue about revolution, making a better world, the toll this takes on the rebels, and so on. [Note: no specific country or region is mentioned, and since this film was made years before the Zapatistas gained wide exposure, it's not an allusion to the situation in Chiapas.] However, the plot is pared to the basics, and thus avoids

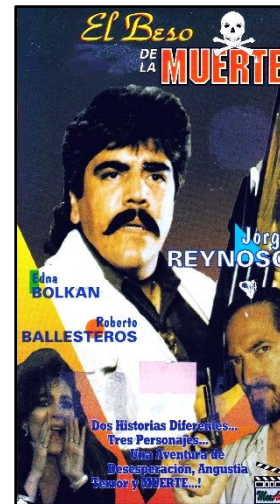
the inconsistencies and gaffes of the first two stories. Nothing is really explained and—for good or bad—there aren't any twists.

*Muertes violentas* is not a good film, but it's not horrible, either. "Miguel Marte" made a large number of *videohomes* and he's a competent director in a medium that was hampered by low budgets and the concomitant

lack of technical resources. Better plots would have helped this one considerably, but one can say that about a lot of movies.

**Trivia notes:** as Justin McKinney notes on his blog (<https://thebloodypitofhorror.blogspot.com/2020/08/muertes-violentas-1990.html>), some of the police agents in the first story reappear as members of the guerrilla group in the final tale. Some of the firearms were also repurposed, and even the green beret worn by one of the policemen in the first part now shows up as the headwear of Ángel Sancho in the third story!

Magazine article about Miguel Ángel Martínez aka Ángel Sancho aka Miguel Marte: <https://www.chilango.com/cine/miguel-marte-el-ultimo-heroe-del-videohome/>



### Historias espeluznantes [Hair-Raising Tales]\*

(Prods. Futuro, ©1991) *Exec Prod:* Gonzalo Herrerías *Dir-Scr:* René Cardona III; *Photo:* Germán Salcedo; *Music:* Juan C. Gutiérrez; *Asst Dir:* Jorge Ávila, Jorge Arvisu [sic]; *Art Dir:* Guillermo Buigas

\*aka *El beso de la muerte* [The Kiss of Death] and *Muertes anunciadas* [Deaths Foretold]

**Cast:** Jorge Reynoso (*Arturo Montes*), Edna Bolkan (*Tania*), Roberto Ballesteros (*Alex, director*), Acela [sic] Robinson (*Anne Silva; Liz*), Gloria Chávez (*Tania's mother*), Fany Rosas, Alfredo Dávila, Alicia del Lago (*Carmela, Anne's maid*) Julima Cardona (?*Tania's niece*), Guillermo von Son, Gabriel Monterola

**Notes:** this anthology is professionally made but isn't particularly notable or (for the first two-thirds) interesting. Production values are adequate—there is a good stunt in the first story and a decent car crash (into a lake) in the second—but don't expect much in the way of unusual settings or special effects.

It's unclear why the U.S. video release had its title changed to *El beso de la muerte* (which has no relevance to any of the stories) except perhaps to camouflage the fact that it was a fantasy film (the box art makes it look like a standard Jorge Reynoso action film—both he and Roberto Ballesteros are holding guns, which they don't have in the film--and curiously the text says “*Dos Historias Diferentes...*” [Two Different Stories]). The release (on DVD?) as *Muertes anunciadas* is much more truthful, both in the box art and the catch-phrase (“No one can escape from the grasp of the beyond”).



The first story (which runs about 17 minutes of the 81-minute running time) is very slight and predictable. Wealthy businessman Arturo returns from a trip and when he gets home, he discovers a newspaper headline indicating he has died! The phone doesn't work, and



when he rushes into the street and confronts various passersby, they can't see or hear him, and he can't touch them.

However, he snaps out of this—it was apparently a dream—and gets phone calls apologising for the “error” in the newspaper story. Arturo leaves his house and now people can see and hear him. Except he wanders into the street and is hit and killed by a car...so the newspaper story has come true.

This segment is basically a one-character story starring Jorge Reynoso. Reynoso is satisfactory, but the script is quite superficial and nothing much goes on.

In the second story, Tania—who is blind—is the only survivor of an automobile crash that kills her uncle and young cousin (the car plunged into a lake). Later, Tania begins to receive mysterious telephone calls, allegedly from her late uncle. [The police later say the telephone lines fell into the lake where Tania's uncle and cousin drowned, a twist on the old “the phone calls are coming from the cemetery!” bit.] Her mother fears Tania is developing psychological issues. However, to the

audience's surprise, it turns out there actually is a (subjective-camera) malevolent spirit on the loose and it chases Tania around the ranch. Tania's mother returns to find her daughter drowned in the bathtub, covered with vegetation.

There are a number of similarities between the plots of this episode and *Carnival of Souls*—survivor of an automobile accident (car plunges into water) is haunted by a mysterious figure/voice on the phone, and is eventually killed (or was always dead?).

Edna Bolkan's dialogue seems to have been post-dubbed by someone else, oddly; otherwise, she's adequate in the role of the threatened heroine, although she only works

intermittently at pretending to be blind. Gloria Chávez, the director's mother (a former actress/dancer and the wife



of René Cardona Jr.) plays Bolkan's mother and also turns in a decent performance. However, once again the story is very thin and in this case it's stretched out even longer than part one.

This episode was shot on somebody's large, well-appointed ranch (which, oddly enough, appears to have no one living or working there, other than Tania and her mother—I wonder who does the gardening, cares for the horses, etc.?). It runs about 28 minutes, leaving around 32 minutes for the final tale.

Liz's husband is bringing his boss home for dinner, so she is busy preparing the meal, supervising her two young sons, etc. Suddenly, she finds herself on a film set representing her “bedroom,” and is told she's an actress named Anne, who's appearing in a movie. Anne/Liz refuses to believe this, demanding to know where her children are, where the rest of her house is (she sees the walls of the room are just painted flats), etc. Anne, still believing she's Liz, is taken to a psychiatric hospital. She disguises herself as a nurse and nearly escapes, but is caught and given electro-shock treatment by an abusive male nurse (whom she had previously knocked unconscious). A fellow patient refers to her as “Liz,” and gives her a book titled “A Door to Other Dimensiones” by Sergio Verni (I've been unable to determine if this is an actual book or not, but the cover looks real). Anne reads the book and begins to act “cured” (i.e., as if she realises she is Anne, not Liz) and to interact with the other patients. She's discharged in the custody of Alex, her



director, and goes “home” (to a very luxurious house—but then again, Anne is supposedly a “famous movie star”).



Anne puts on the costume and grabs the script from her previous film, then returns to the studio. Amazingly, the bedroom set is still standing (although it’s been stripped of most of the furnishings). She repeats her actions from before, and suddenly the room is “real” and her children come in. As Liz looks in the mirror, she sees the burn mark on her temple from the electro-shock, “proving” her experience was real. [This is a standard trope, in which a character recovers from an alleged dream or fantasy, but with tangible proof that their adventure did occur. However, in the context of this film, Liz doesn’t say “Oh, it was all a dream,” so the “proof” to negate this isn’t needed.]

The third story in *Historias espeluznantes* is the longest and by far the best. Azela Robinson does a fine job as the tormented Liz, the pace doesn’t drag, and there’s a happy ending. No explanation is given as to how the book re-opened the door to Liz’s dimension—something the audience would have expected, given the big build-up—but this is not a major flaw.

The only mildly annoying aspect of the third episode is the portrayal of the psychiatric hospital: as occurs in numerous Mexican films, the patients seem to be unsupervised and wander about, displaying “odd” traits (although here they aren’t threatening—in fact, with the exception of the one male nurse, the staff is also depicted as concerned and professional). Curiously, all of the other patients (male and female) we see are dressed in street clothes—only Anne/Liz wears a standard hospital gown.

*Historias espeluznantes* is not very “hair-raising,” and the first two stories are superficial and disposable, but the third tale is rather good.



## GHOSTS & VAMPIRES, OH MY!

**El fantasma se enamora** [The Ghost in Love](T.U.C.S.A., 1952) *Dir/Scr:* Rafael Portillo; *Story/Adapt:* Alfredo Salazar; *Photo:* Rosalío Solano; *Music:* Francisco Argote; *Prod Chief:* Antonio Guajardo; *Asst Dir:* Humberto Gavaldón; *Film Ed:* José Bustos; *Camera Op:* Felipe León Mariscal; *Lighting:* Antonio Solano; *Makeup:* Sara Herrera; *Sound Ed:* Reynaldo Puente; *Dialog Rec:* Manuel Topete, Francisco Alcayde; *Re-rec:* Galdino Samperio; *Spec FX:* Jorge Benavides; *Studio:* Churubusco-Azteca

**Cast:** Gloria Marín (*Laura Fernández*), Abel Salazar (*Armando Gallardo*), Ramón Gay (*Sr. Gallardo, Armando’s father*), Aurora Walker (*doña Clara de Gallardo*), Arturo Soto Rangel (*Benito*), Carlos Riquelme (*Julio Gallardo*), Patricia Morelos (*Aunt Adela*), Tony Carbajal (*Raúl*), Natalia Ortíz (*Aunt Loreto*)



**Notes:** another film that finally resurfaced (on television) after a long absence (García Riera hadn’t even seen it when he wrote the second edition of his *Historia documental del cine mexicano*), *El fantasma se enamora* is an acceptable fantasy-romantic comedy, bearing a slight resemblance to *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, and *El caso de la mujer asesinada* (the Mexican film version of which would star Salazar and Marín a few years later).

Laura and her two maiden aunts—who raised her after her parents’ death—rent the country house of Sra. Gallardo. There is only one condition: no one is to enter the bedroom of her youngest son Armando, who has been absent for many years. Naturally, Laura’s curiosity gets the best of her, and she goes into the room and finds...nothing of particular interest (to the audience, anyway).

Meanwhile, Armando is mortally wounded by hostile indigenous people in Brazil. Before he dies, Armando expresses a desire to see his mother and the country house one more time. He therefore reappears as a ghost and

visits his mother and brother, but they cannot see or hear him. [Later in the film, he can “pop” from one place to another, and can apparently interact with solid objects, including people.] His father, also deceased, pops up as Armando’s



guiding spirit. He informs Armando that his son’s corpse was eaten by cannibals! Armando decides to visit the country house, irritated that it’s been rented to strangers.

However, upon arriving at the house, Armando is captivated by Laura (his father’s ghost is also attracted to her, causing some rivalry between the two male spirits). Somehow she senses Armando’s presence and falls in love with him. However, her aunts decide to relocate to Acapulco and insist that Laura comes along. Meanwhile, Armando’s father informs him that he’s expected to report to Heaven since his final wishes have been granted. The next morning, Laura and her aunts depart; Armando is unaware that the heavenly council has decreed that he and Laura will be united...in three, two, one—CRASH! Laura is killed in an auto accident, and she and Armando stroll off towards Heaven together.

*El fantasma se enamora* is barely 80 minutes long, but not much happens—there isn’t much “conflict”—and it is quite slow-paced. The last 15 minutes go on forever. The



premise is rather flawed: Laura never sees Armando (she doesn’t even know his name for quite a while), never hears him speak, knows nothing of his life or his thoughts, but apparently falls in love with him by

osmosis. They have “conversations,” but these are all one-sided: he can hear and respond to her, but she can’t hear him. Compare this to *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, for example, where a ghost and a live woman interact and fall in love over a period of time (whereas in *El fantasma se enamora* the events take place in a few days).

The cast is small but good, although most of the footage goes to Salazar and Marín, with Ramón Gay providing welcome comic relief as Armando’s father

(who, because he died young, actually looks younger than his own son). Gay even gets a few funny lines: he’s constantly being summoned back to Heaven on “business,” but in one instance he leaves and returns almost immediately.

Armando: “Why are you back so soon?”

Father: “It was a false alarm. The doctor didn’t arrive and [the patient] was saved. It happens.”

Marín plays it all quite seriously, while Salazar gets to alternate acting melodramatically love-struck (in his scenes with Marín) and like a normal human being (in his scenes with Gay).

Production values are fine. A fair amount of the film was shot at someone’s actual country house, which isn’t a huge mansion, but looks very pleasant.



Coincidentally, *El fantasma se enamora* teamed director Rafael Portillo and scripter Alfredo Salazar, who’d work together a number of times in the future, notably on the “Momia azteca” series. Abel Salazar is best-known internationally for his horror films of the late Fifties and early Sixties (such as *El vampiro* and *El barón del terror*); while he primarily appeared in “straight” comedies and dramas, he did show up in a number of fantasy films prior to his ABSA period, including *El fantasma se enamora*, *Se le fue la mano*, *El caso de la mujer asesinadita*, and *Ella, Lucifer y yo*.



**Sed de venganza\*** [Thirst for Vengeance] (Eagle Films Corp.\*\*, 1987 ©1988) *Exec Prod:* Orlando R. Mendoza; *Assoc Prod:* Carlos Mendoza Maldonado; *Dir:* Luis Quintanilla Rico; *Story/Adapt:* Ramón Obón [Jr.]; *Photo:* Fernando Álvarez “Colín”; *Asst Dir & Film Ed:* Javier García Espinosa; *Script Clerk:* Roberto Marroquín; *Decor:* Gerardo Hernández; *Cam Op:* Manuel Tejada, Carlos Dueñas; *Spec FX:* Arturo Godínez; *Sound Op:* Abel Flores; *Re-rec:* Ariel Tellez; *Union:* STIC; *Studio:* Estudios América; *Production began:* September 1987

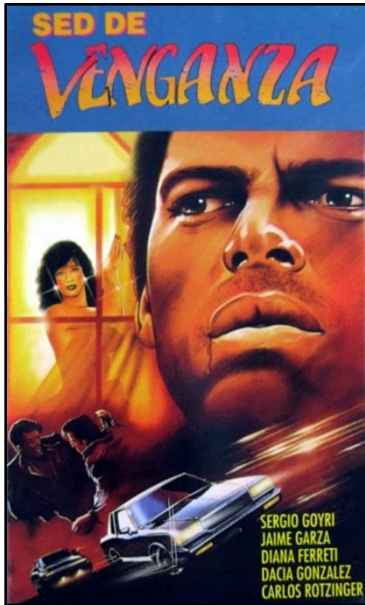
\* aka *Dinastía sangrienta*

\*\* some sources credit Cine Falcón Prods.

**Cast:** Sergio Goyri (*Dracul*), Jaime Garza (*Luis Brenes\*\*\**; *Luis’s father*), Diana Ferreti (*Diana*), Carlos Rotzinger (*comisario Quintana*), Dacia González (*María*), Jorge Fegan (*Dr. Wilson*), Lizbeth Castro



(Patricia), Lizbeth Olivier (Lilia), Blas García (Sr. Méndez), Víctor Lozoya (man bitten by bat), Gabriela del



Valle (comisario's secretary), Elena Novi, José L[uis] Fernández (Igor), Elsa Montés (singer), Dacia Arcazar (first victim), Valentín Santana, Elizabeth Villagómez, Carolina Campos

\*\*\* it sounds like Carlos Rotzinger is saying "Brenes" rather than the name in the original film, "Brenner."

**Notes:** like *Adorables criminales* (1987, a remake of

*Las sicodélicas*), *Sed de venganza* is a close remake (even most of the character names are retained, except "Draculstein" is changed to "Dracul") of a previous film from the 1960s (*El imperio de Drácula*). Both remakes were produced by Orlando R. Mendoza, written by Ramón Obón Jr., directed by Luis Quintanilla Rico, shot on videotape in the state of Morelos, and featured Elsa Montes, Dacia González, and Carlos Rotzinger in the cast. [Obón also re-sold his script for 1967's *Los asesinos* again—as *Pleito de colosos*, 1992—but to a different producer; this one, a Western, was directed by Alfredo B. Crevenna.] Also like *Adorables criminales*, *Sed de venganza* is much inferior to its predecessor.



The film opens as vampire Dracul fights Luis in an old *hacienda*. Luis tears down some curtains and Dracul falls to the floor, twitching like a bug, until Luis rams a fireplace poker into his chest. Dracul turns into a skeleton but Luis dies of his injuries. [This is virtually identical to the opening of *El*

*imperio de Drácula*, and it wasn't even original then (see the conclusion of *Horror of Dracula*). *El imperio de Drácula* and *Sed de venganza* are extremely similar until the final scenes.]

25 years later, Luis's son Luis Jr. is now a grown man. His mother, on her death-bed, tells him that his father was a hero, but the vampire will come back and Luis has to

find the "Cross of Oak" [*La cruz del roble*] in order to defeat him. Luis, his wife Patricia, her younger sister Lilia, and Lilia's *maestra* Diana (presumably her tutor, for some reason), travel to the *hacienda*. When their auto breaks down, the visitors are taken to the mansion by long-time retainer Igor—but when they enter the house, housekeeper María says Igor died some time ago!

Igor isn't dead: in fact, he abducts a young woman and drains her blood into Dracul's skeletal remains, restoring his body (and his clothes). Dracul (sometimes in bat form, sometimes in human form) kills various people, alarming *comisario* (a rural law enforcement officer) Quintana and local doctor Wilson (who's later killed by a bat himself). Dracul vampirises Diana, who sets out to convert Lilia to the undead ranks.

Meanwhile, Quintana and Luis discover a map with the location of the Cross of Oak. Good thing, too, because Dracul has grabbed Patricia and Diana is preparing to bite Lilia. Luis stabs Igor with a sword.

Quintana holds Diana at bay with a little crucifix, while Luis unearths the Cross of Oak and rams it into Dracul's "chest" (more like his stomach, but let's not quibble). Dracul dies (for good, this time), as does Diana (but "her soul is at rest").



*Sed de venganza* is paced quite slowly and very little happens until the last 7-8 minutes. There is little suspense or horror, and a lot of talking, talking, talking. ~~No~~ Every expense was spared to avoid any sort of action\*, and with the exception of the nightclub sequence (discussed shortly), the whole film has an extremely claustrophobic look and feel. \*[It's a real shock when a horse-drawn carriage appears in a couple of scenes. *El imperio de Drácula* is a period film and thus the carriages and wagons make sense there, but in *Sed de venganza* it's not only an anachronism, I'm shocked they went to the trouble to find one.]

At least *Sed de venganza* doesn't have any horrible production gaffes, although some of the sequences are unintentionally humorous in their concept and execution. For instance, Elsa Montes—wearing a skimpy costume and cowboy hat—is shown performing in a large, brightly-lit nightclub. The vampire (probably not Goyri, since he's only seen from behind) is standing right there staring at her, but none of the customers pay any attention to the guy in the vampire costume (they're probably entranced by Elsa's cleavage). She finishes her song and retires to

her dressing room. We get a split-second glimpse of a “bat,” and she looks around repeatedly as she hears loud squeaking noises. She turns, and there’s a cut to a closeup of Goyri (footage from the opening sequence of the movie), who’s clearly not in her dressing room. He growls and she screams. Cut to a wide shot of the nightclub floor, where Elsa’s screams are so loud that all of the customers jump up and stampede out the door! (Except 5 or 6 who don’t seem to know what to do and just stand there). In the very next shot, Goyri attacks a young woman at night, in the middle of a forest.

One thing *Sed de venganza* has going for it is a cast of professionals—including veterans like Jorge Fegan, Dacia González (whose daughter also has a small role), and Carlos

Rotzinger in support of Goyri and Garza--not that anyone is given much to work with. This was one of the first roles for Gabriela del Valle (who



passed away in 2017, I just learned), and it looks like someone behind the camera had a crush on her. In one sequence, the *comisario* asks her to find a particular file; the camera follows her across the room as she departs, then cuts to a scene in which she finds the file, follows her back to the *comisario*’s office where she hands over the file, and follows her again as she leaves the office. She has more screen time than her minor role could possibly justify.

The technical aspects are mediocre at best. *Sed de venganza* was shot on videotape, and the image and sound are quite murky; the intrusive music score is quite obviously all library music (mostly classical). Location shooting took place at the Hacienda San Gaspar, located in Jiutepec (outside of Cuernavaca). Also shot at this historic location in 1987 was *Hasta que la muerte nos separe*, also produced by Orlando R. Mendoza, written (and also directed, this time) by Ramón Obón Jr., and featuring *Sed de venganza* performers Carlos Rotzinger, Dacia González and Diana Ferreti in the cast. However, *Hasta que la muerte nos separe* was shot on 35mm and the *hacienda* can be at least be seen clearly in that movie (unlike in *Sed de venganza*, where it might as well be a back street in Mexico City). In fact, it’s highly possible a fair number of the interior scenes allegedly taking place in the *hacienda* were shot on minimal sets (which look rather like something you’d see on a local “horror host” television program) at the América studios.

As noted above, *Sed de venganza* was originally titled *Dinastía sangrienta*—the latter phrase is used multiple times in the film itself--under which title it’s listed in the

*Diccionario del cine mexicano 1970-2000*

(although this entry has errors, crediting Ramón Obón as director and including various actors in the cast who aren’t in the film at all).



It’s unclear if a video version was ever released under the *Dinastía sangrienta* title, but at least 2 different VHS tapes as *Sed de venganza* have been identified.

A curiosity piece but not even in the “so bad, it’s good” category, *Sed de venganza* is tedious and dull.



### Las nueve caras del miedo [The Nine Faces of

Fear]\* (Uzy Films--Diler Mex--Million Dollar Video Corp., ©1995)  
*Prod:* Patricia Rojas;  
*Assoc Prod:* Miguel Kahan (MDVC), Luis Calzada, Carlos Sánchez Salazar (Diler Mex); *Dir-Scr:* Christian González; *Photo:* Juan José Saravia; *Music:* Richard Cuervo; *Addtl Themes:* Cuauhtémoc Ponce; *Prod Mgr:* Juan Carlos García Mata; *Asst Dir:* Luis Enrique Hernández; *Film Ed:* Cuauhtémoc Ponce;  
*Special Makeup & FX:* Luis Carlos Horcasitas; *Sound:* Carlos Almazán; *Music Ed:* Miguel Larraguivel; *Re-rec:* Miguel Larraguivel Jr.



\*also released as *El hotel del horror*

**Cast:** Sebastián Ligarde (*Ceviche*), Roberto Ballasteros (*Duval*), Guillermo Quintanilla (*Claudio Figueroa Torres*), Carmen del Valle (*Romina Huerta Valdés*), Armando Silvestre (*Dr. Mauricio Galván Fuentes*), Manuel Ojeda (*Fray Camilo Lacroix Imbrino*), Andreas Pearse [sic] (*Edi*), Abigail Florido (*Yolanda*), Claudia Nayeli Ferriz (*Gina*), Adriana Ríos (*Betty*), Ángel Tinajero & Rafael Horcasitas (*paramedics*)



**Notes:** Christian González is a cult director in Mexico, with numerous films to his credit, mostly *videohomes*. Quite a few of these are either outright horror/fantasy, or crime films with outré elements. *Las nueve caras del miedo* is quite stylishly shot and edited, with explicit gore effects and some nudity, all attributes which were becoming rarer in the *videohome* medium as the 1990s went on.

In 1959, a Mexican butcher-turned-labour leader/politician named Severo Canchola murdered numerous people in a Mexico City hotel. More than 30 years later, a “ghost hunter” television program



investigates stories that the building is haunted. The show’s producer is Duval. On site are experts Claudio (a police officer who is also a

medium), Fray Camilo (a doctor of theology and “occult sciences”), Dr. Galván (a psychiatrist and parapsychologist), and Romina (another parapsychologist and medium). The crew (and hangers-on) includes Ceviche, Edi, Gina, Betty, and Yolanda.

There is a bit of conflict between the various characters, but pretty soon the action heats up. Claudio becomes possessed, attacks Fray Camilo, and strangles Gina (the on-screen host), almost fatally. We learn Duval wanted Claudio (who wasn’t really possessed, and is not



even a medium) to murder Gina for the ratings. Meanwhile, Romina begins to experience psychic distress and tries to leave, but the hotel’s doors are locked

from the outside, and won’t be opened until the next morning. But Fray Camilo is actually possessed, and kills Gina (he rips out her eyeballs and intestines).

More murders occur, in gory fashion. Ceviche: spine ripped out. Betty: top of skull torn off. Dr. Galván injects Fray Camilo with sodium pentathol to knock him out, but Claudio follows up with an overdose of adrenaline, killing him. Edi takes his girlfriend Yolanda into another room to have sex, but is possessed in mid-act; he rips out Yolanda’s tongue and cuts off her arms, and also turns

into a sort of Harvey Dent-“Two Face” monster. Dr. Galván injects him with adrenaline and then beats him to death with a chair.

Duval, Galván, Romina, and Claudio survive, but it’s still 3 hours until they can escape from the...Hotel of Horror! Romina says the evil spirit can possess any of them if they are distracted (Fray Camilo fell asleep, Edi had an orgasm). She proposes to free the spirit guide (Lilí) that accompanies her. Lilí says their souls are in danger: the malignant spirit feeds on their fear. If they have faith their souls can be saved, but only one person will be alive at the end of the night. Duval will be the next one possessed, because he’s been using drugs. Dr. Galván tries to use his last vial of adrenaline to kill Duval, but has his

head severed with a guitar string (then Duval uses the head like a soccer ball).



Claudio escapes but goes back into the hotel for Romina, who’s been caught by Duval. Claudio trades his life for hers, but Romina discovers the door is locked again and Duval grabs her. He threatens to dunk her in a bathtub full of acid, but she plunges her face into it, to deny him the pleasure of her fear. Duval becomes un-possessed. As the film concludes, he’s taken away in a strait-jacket, shouting “I’m not crazy!”

As mentioned above, *Las nueve caras del miedo* is well-made: González uses a lot of flashy visuals, but the overall *mise-en-scene* is also quite good, so that even static shots are well-composed and lit. The gore effects aren’t great, but they’re satisfactory enough.

The cast consists of six “names” (Ballesteros, Ligarde, Quintanilla, Ojeda, del Valle, and Silvestre), one “familiar face” (Andreas Pears, whose last name has been over the years variously spelled “Pears,” “Pearse,” and “Pearce”), and a handful of newcomers (the other 3 women performers, whose credits are primarily in Christian González films). Everyone is satisfactory, but Quintanilla, del Valle, and Ballesteros get more attention, with Silvestre close behind. Del Valle does a lot of twitching and puking up blue foam, unglamorous stuff, and is a solid trouper.

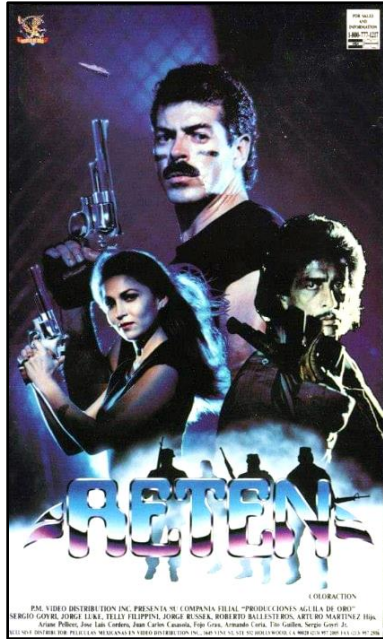
Trivia: One suspects *Las nueve caras del miedo* was the original title, since the main title screen for *El hotel del horror* is superimposed on-screen in a large white box

(although the font is similar to the original) to cover up the previous title.



## POLICE STATES

**Retén** [Checkpoint] (Farfán & Goyri Asociados, 1991) *Assoc Prod:* Delfino López, Fiana Coronado\*; *Dir:* Sergio Goyri, Federico Farfán Jr.; *Scr:* Juan Manuel González; *Story:* Sergio Goyri; *Photo:* Tim Ross; *Music:* Héctor Zavala, Rogelio Nobara; *Prod Mgr:* Jesús Bretón, Luz María Jasso\*\*; *Asst Dir:* Jorge Arvizu; *Film Ed:* Pedro Ramírez, Juan Castro, Antonio Huerta; *Art Dir:* Juan Belmont; *Graphic Design:* Juan Carlos Manjárez;



*Makeup:* Laura Hernández, Eduardo Arias; *Spec FX Dir:* Federico Farfán; *Sound:* Óscar Mateos

\*sometimes credited as “Fina Coronado”

\*\*Jasso credited as “Prod. Asst” on end credits

**Cast:** Sergio Goyri (*Galad*), Jorge Luke (*Modred*), Jorge Russek (*police chief*), Roberto Ballesteros (*Mur*), Telly Filippini (*Fedra*), Arturo Martínez [Jr.] (*Borg*), Ariane Pellicer (*Dalia la Gitana*), José Luis Cordero (*Soltan*), Juan Carlos Casasola (*Tzaro*), Rojo Grau (*Alí*), Armando Coria (*Wind*), Tito Guillén (*Kioks*), Sergio Goyri Jr. (*young Galad*), Jesús Cordero (*Modred as a boy*)

**Notes:** although chiefly known as a star of action films, in the late 1980s and early 1990s Sergio Goyri appeared in a number of science fiction/horror/fantasy films, including *La noche de la bestia*, *Un paso al más acá*, *El trono del infierno*, *Sed de venganza* (aka *Dinastía sangrienta*), *Comando de la muerte*, and *El arma secreta*. While some of these were certainly works for hire, Goyri did direct (or co-direct) *Retén*, *El arma secreta*, and *El trono del infierno* (respectively, a post-apocalyptic sci-fi movie, an action-comedy about a Frankenstein-ish monster, and a fantasy film).

[*Retén* should not be confused with *Reto a la ley* (*Retén de la muerte*), a contemporary action picture made

in 1992 and also featuring Goyri, Russek, and Filippini. *Reto a la ley* got a theatrical release, whereas *Retén* was a *videohome*.]

*Retén* begins with a long text prologue setting up the world of the film:

“As a result of the first atomic confrontation, a devastating wave of ecological accidents has shaken the planet.

The hole in the ozone layer, perforated by industrial abuses and the mistaken technological development, has grown, multiplying the gases and radiation that are deadly to human beings, and the flora and fauna of the Earth.

Those who managed to save themselves confront the attack of populations contaminated by new species of deadly viruses.

To save those who haven’t been contaminated, the Security Council has configured a system of checkpoints, with minefields, electric fences, and 24-hour guards, with the intent of isolating the infected.

Greedy interests have caused a surge in smuggling of arms and other goods to the mutants. Establishing in this way an equal opportunity for criminals and outsiders and a battle field without pause or mercy.

Despite this, the riches that the smuggling with contaminated zones generate, constitute an incentive for dangerous traffickers to challenge the authority of the Checkpoint.”

Smuggler chief Modred, Dalia, Borg and a henchman attack a Checkpoint post to steal weapons. They kill 2 guards and policeman Galad’s partner, then escape. The chief of security says the virus-riddled “mutants” have increased



their attacks—“we can’t blame them for their struggle to survive,” but they can’t be permitted to penetrate the safe area. “It’s our responsibility to safeguard the security of those who haven’t been infected by the errors of the past.”

[These “mutants” are never seen—except for Modred’s henchman Borg, about whom more below—and the conflict in *Retén* is between the security forces and smugglers (who are criminals and occasionally dress a bit wacky, but aren’t mutated in any way). Basically, the whole thing about virus and mutants is an excuse for the plot device of the Checkpoint system. ]

Galad, sort of a loose cannon, is assigned Fedra as his new partner in the hopes that her good qualities (such as



patience) will rub off on him. Doesn't work: she becomes almost as trigger-happy as he is, and they fall in love. When Modred's men plant a bomb in Galad's police



cruiser and blow it up, the chief of security gets angry and assigns Galad and Fedra to a sector of the Checkpoint system where smugglers have been coming through too frequently.

Modred is conflicted about his life as a smuggler. He remembers when he and some other children were taken away from their mothers (for reasons unknown). He later says Galad and Galad's brother were also in the group—Galad's brother became a smuggler but was killed by his companions because they suspected he was working with Galad.

Sector security chief Mur and some of his officers are crooked cops. Modred abducts Fedra to lure Galad beyond the barriers (although he could have simply shot Galad when he captured Fedra, go figure). Galad rescues Fedra and a battle ensues (the chief of security shows up in person to help—also, a third patrol car is blown up): Mur, Dalia, and most of Modred's men are killed. At the climax, Galad allows Modred to escape. The chief of security says “good and evil depend on which side you're on...[the smugglers] are just trying to survive.”

*Retén* was one of a number of dystopian Mexican films made in this era (others included *Comando de la muerte* and *La rata maldita*; *El ombligo de la luna* was a predecessor, made in 1985). In this case, *Retén*'s script is considerably too ambitious for its budget.



It's unclear how far in the future it's supposed to be taking place (some sources say “2100” but this isn't stated in the film itself), but inside the “Checkpoint” barriers, Mexico City looks exactly like 1991 Mexico City, including buildings, autos, weapons, and the clothing

worn by people on the streets. The opening sequence raises expectations that aren't satisfied by the rest of the film: shot at night, in a deserted warehouse area, the shortcomings of the *mise-en-scene* are well-hidden, and an actual car blowing up is a surprising touch. [Even more shocking, a second car explodes in a later scene! This isn't stock footage, either. And then a third car is blown up—by an antique cannon!—at the end of the movie!!] There are some appropriately desolate locations outside the safe zone (industrial, construction and/or derelict sites, one imagines)—especially in the last third of the film—which provide a nice contrast with those scenes shot in normal, everyday Distrito Federal, which apparently hasn't changed since 1991 nor been affected by the atomic wars or deadly virus. Surely some parts of the protected area would be a least little different?

[Had the film been made a few years later, perhaps CGI and green-screen could have been employed for a price more amenable to *Retén*'s budget. But in 1991, it was all practical effects and location shooting.]



Another issue is that the film sets up its premise (in the aforementioned opening prologue) but leaves far too many loose ends. The film focuses on Mexico City, a safe haven for the uninfected, but there's no mention of the rest of the world: are there similar enclaves in other countries? How are all of the amenities of everyday life maintained in the city, if the “outside” world is cut off? Where does the food, fuel, etc., come from? No hint of any sort of shortages is ever given. The script makes a point that certain substances (such as gold) are mined in the “mountains,” and smuggling them into the city is a lucrative business, but the more mundane necessities aren't discussed at all.

Additionally, the Checkpoint system is vague. Is the city completely surrounded by fences and walls? [Minefields are also discussed but not shown.] In several scenes, Modred and his gang sneak into the city (sometimes aided by corrupt cops), but there are times

when they're just there, and make no particular effort to hide themselves.

However, credit should be given to Goyri and Juan Manuel González for including some interesting subsidiary ideas (as opposed to the basic premise) regarding situational ethics. The personalities and backstories of Galad, Fedra, Modred and Dalia are not explicated in great detail, but there's more there than one might expect, which is admirable.

The performances are satisfactory. Jorge Luke gives his all, and Ariane Pellicer (daughter of Pilar Pellicer) makes a good villainess (one sympathises with her, since she constantly wears the same skimpy hot pants outfit while dashing

around various dirty ruins). Arturo Martínez Jr. plays "Borg," who by an amazing coincidence has cyborg parts stuck on his face, just like the Borg in the "Star Trek: The Next



Generation" series (who made their first appearance in 1989). Sadly, in his next scene, Borg has lost most of his face-hardware, then gets shot and blows up!

Goyri and Farfán Jr.'s direction is fine, and the cinematography by Tim Ross has its moments. In general, *Retén* is a professional job undone by its script and budget, but is worth a look.



**Nuevo orden** [New Order] (Lo Que Algunos Soñaron-Les Films D'Ici, ©2020) *Exec Prod:* Lorenzo Vigas, Diego Boneta, Cecilia Franco, Charles Barthe; *Prod:* Michel Franco, Cristina Velasco L., Eréndira Núñez Larios; *Co-Prod:* Charlotte Uzu; *Line Prod:* Alejandro Sánchez de la Peña; *Dir/Scr:* Michel Franco; *Photo:* Yves Cape; *Prod Mgr:* Octavio López; *Asst Dir:* Bruno Montes de Oca; *Film Ed:* Óscar Figueroa Jara, Michel Franco; *Prod Des:* Claudia Ramírez Castelli; *Makeup Des:* Adam Zoller Duplán; *Costume Des:* Gabriela Fernández; *Sound Des:* Alejandro de Icaza; *Dir Sound:* Raúl Locatelli; *Visual FX Supv:* Yves Cape; *SpFX Supv:* Ricardo Arvizu

**Cast:** Naian González Norvind (*Marianne Novello*), Mónica del Carmen (*Marta*), Fernando Cuautle (*Cristian*), Diego Boneta (*Daniel Novello*), Eligio Menéndez (*Rolando*), Darío Yazbek (*Alan*), Patricia Bernal (*Pilar*), Roberto Medina (*Iván Novello*), Lisa

Owen (*Rebeca*), Enrique Singer (*Victor*), Gustavo Sánchez Parra (*General Oribe*), Regina Flores (*Elisa*), Sebastián Silveti (*Pablo*), Ana Bethoux (*Estelle*), Claudia Lobo (*Tamara*), Eduardo Victoria (*Reynaldo*), Xavier Cervantes (*Marcos*), Cirilo Santiago (*Everardo*), Isaac Krause (*Tío Isaac*), Mercedes Hernández (*Josefa*), Anay Castro (*Isabela*), Ximena García (*Blanca*), Antonio López Torres (*Toño*), Alejandro Sánchez de la Peña (*priest*)

**Notes:** *Nuevo orden* was nominated for 10 Arieles—but notably, neither Best Film nor Best Director—and came away with only one (Best Special Effects, Ricardo Arvizu),

suggesting that the Mexican establishment (and film community) were perhaps not wholly in sympathy with Michel Franco's vision of a military-run totalitarian society in Mexico in the near-future.

Or, perhaps, the film simply didn't appeal to



them. *Nuevo orden* is well-made, but leaves many questions unanswered, and isn't what one would call "entertaining." Not that a film has to be fun and have a happy ending, but even a serious, depressing drama with political overtones can make its point more clearly than *Nuevo orden* does. It's only 80 minutes long (plus about 5 minutes of end credits)—surely 10 minutes could have been added to flesh out the skeletal plot?

As the film begins (after a brief prologue showing civil unrest), the wedding reception of Marianne Novello and Alan is being held at her wealthy family's home in the Pedregal section of Mexico City. Rolando, a former employee of the Novello family, arrives to ask for help: his wife Luisa (also a long-time family employee), was evicted from the hospital due to the influx of injured rioters. Luisa needs a heart valve replacement, and Rolando can't afford to put her in a private hospital. Marianne's mother Pilar comes up with some cash, but only a fraction of what is needed. Marianne tries to give him some of the money she's received as wedding gifts, but her mother has changed the combination to the house safe where the money is kept. Marianne and Cristian,



Rolando's grandson who still works for the family (as does his mother Marta), drive to his home, intending to take Luisa to the hospital themselves.



While they're gone, a mob invades the Novello home, looting the house, and robbing and killing many guests (Pilar is forced to open the safe, then shot and killed; her husband Iván is also shot, but survives). This section of *Nuevo orden*—"poor people" invade a wealthy home—is an extreme version of similar situations shown in films such as *Fin de fiesta* (1971) and *Flores de papel* (1977).

Martial law is apparently declared (it's unclear how this comes about: no larger issues are discussed at all) and the military institutes a curfew. Marianne and Cristian can't leave his house, and eventually soldiers come and take Marianne away, on the pretense of returning her to her home. Instead, she's put in a detention center with many other people: they're tortured, raped, and abused, and forced to record messages for their families demanding payment of ransom for their release (although it's suggested once the ransom is paid, the victim is murdered rather than freed).



Víctor, a powerful politician and family friend of the Novellos, assigns General Oribe to find Marianne, but time goes by and she remains "missing." [While the military is operating the detention center, it's unclear if this is an official operation or being done by some officers on their own account.] Two soldiers approach Cristian and say they can free Marianne if they're given a large sum of cash. Cristian and Marta receive work permits and return to the Novello house. Iván is bed-ridden due to

his injuries, so Marianne's brother Daniel agrees to the ransom payment. Cristian hands over the money, then the soldiers demand more. Daniel turns to Víctor and Oribe; Cristian, Marta, and the two soldiers are arrested.

Marianne is taken out of the detention center. It appears that the military is trying to cover its tracks, as a number of hostages are executed and their bodies burned. Driven to Cristian's home, Marianne is shot to death and Cristian is framed for her murder (then also killed). As the film concludes, the two soldiers and Marta are hung.

*Nuevo orden* ends with a shot of the Mexican flag, suggesting an implicit criticism of Mexico (and Franco doesn't try to hedge his bets by including a disclaimer that "this could take place in any country"). There's a socio-economic gulf between the haves and have-nots, check. The poor eventually revolt, and attack their oppressors, check. The military responds harshly, check. It's not as black-and-white as this, of course. The Novellos—especially Pilar—have a paternalistic/patronising attitude towards their employees, but Marianne actually attempts to take action to help Rolando and Elisa (which backfires on her, as this results in her eventual detention and death).

When the mob breaks into the Novello household, the servants and caterers gleefully join in the looting, which—along with the murders and assaults we see—mitigate



against the audience's sympathy with these "underdogs." Marianne is "rescued" by soldiers, but this immediately takes a twist: she isn't taken home, but to the detention center. This is run by the military (including some high-ranking officers) and isn't, as one might expect, for rioters or subversives, but is filled with well-connected people who are being held for ransom. The military's response to the riots is a violent crackdown (Rolando is shot on the street when he tries to get help for his dying wife). A rigid system of "work permits" and checkpoints aimed at the working class is instituted (which, in the case of Cristian and Marta, allows them to resume their positions as servants for the wealthy Novello family).

The film doesn't explain anything. Did the military foment the riots in order to establish their "new order," or did they just take advantage of civil unrest that erupted spontaneously due to social injustice? What about the civil government? Did an actual military coup occur, or

are the politicians complicit? Do these conditions apply to the whole country, or just to Mexico City?

The performances are good, although there isn't a lot of character development. Naian González Norvind, daughter of actress Nailea Norvind (and granddaughter of Eva Norvind) as Marianne is sort of the protagonist, I suppose, although Fernando Cuautle as Cristian probably has almost as much screen time. Marianne spends much of the film either off-screen or in a semi-catatonic state while undergoing abuse in the detention center. Cuautle is also something of a blank slate: Franco's script gives no one much of a chance to "act!" *Nuevo orden*, despite the horrific events of the plot, is a rather "cool" film in dramatic terms. We see a lot of people undergoing difficult trials and there are scenes where people scream, cry, shout, etc., but rarely does anyone talk about their thoughts or feelings.

These are valid criticisms, but one's personal taste and expectations will determine your reaction to the film. Franco made the film he wanted to make, and audiences who want something different will have to look elsewhere. As it stands, *Nuevo orden* has a lot of impact and is certainly professionally put together, but it's not necessarily profound or especially thought-provoking.



## ZOMBIE INFESTATIONS



**Santo contra los zombies** [English version title: The Invasion of the Zombies] (Filmadora Panamericana, 1961) *Prod:* Alberto López; *Dir:* Benito Alazraki; *Adapt:* Benito Alazraki, Antonio Orellana; *Story:* Antonio Orellana, Fernando Osés; *Photo:* José Ortiz Ramos;

*Music:* Raúl Lavista; *Prod Mgr:* Manuel R. Ojeda; *Prod Chief:* Jorge Cardeña; *Asst Dir:* Carlos Villatoro; *Film Ed:* José Bustos; *Art Dir:* José Silva; *Camera Op:* Ignacio Romero; *Makeup:* Carmen Palomino; *Lighting:* Gabriel Castro; *Sound:* Rafael Ruiz Esparza, Galdino Samperio, James L. Fields; *Sound Ed:* Reynaldo P. Portillo; *Union:* STPC



**Cast:** (second character name, if given, is from English version, if different from original): Armando Silvestre (*Capt. Sanmartín=Savage*), Lorena Velázquez (*Gloria Sandoval=Gloria Rutherford*), Santo (*himself=The Saint*), Jaime Fernández (*Rodríguez*), Irma Serrano (*Isabel*), Black Shadow (*himself*), Dagoberto Rodríguez (*Almada, chief of detectives*), Carlos Agosti (*Genaro=Herbert*), Ramón Bugarini (*Rogelio= Roger, the butler*), Martha Arlette (*dancer*), Julián de Meriche (*Dino Povetti*), Fernando Osés (*Dorrel López= Harry Dorell*), Eduardo Bonada (*zombie*), Eduardo Silvestre (*zombie*), Gori Guerrero (*wrestler*), Sugi Sito (*wrestler*), El Bulldog, Firpo Segura, Joe Silva, Steve Morgan, Indio Cacama (*zombie*), Mario Téxas, Conjunto Antonio Díaz Mena, "Picoro" (*ring announcer*), Juan Garza (*zombie*), Fernando Curiel (*jewelry store watchman*), Rafael María de Labra (*Prof. Sandoval*), Carlos Hennings (*wrestling spectator*), Mirón Levine (*professor*), Jorge Zamora (*musician*)

**Notes:** This was the first Santo film made in Mexico and, unlike his two previous features shot in Cuba, the "Santo mythos" is already fairly well-established here. For example, the opening sequence shows Santo in the wrestling ring, being cheered by the crowd (who carry him in on their shoulders), thus establishing him not just as any old professional wrestler, but as an idol of the multitudes. Furthermore, Santo isn't a wrestler who just happens to stumble into crime-fighting, he actually has a secret headquarters full of electronic gizmos, and the police consult him for assistance.



However, the film still uses Santo only sparingly: after the first two wrestling matches (which, along with the credits, take up the first 12 minutes of the movie), he's not on-screen again until the 24-minute mark (and then only for a few seconds); he has another on-screen wrestling match at the 28-minute mark. In the latter half of the movie he appears more frequently and has some extended scenes. Santo is given little dialogue (the only time he says more than a few words is at the very end when he has a brief speech) and--consequently--doesn't have much personality. Later films in which Santo is shown in his home, with his girlfriend(s), etc., and where he actually takes charge of the current, perilous situation, do a better job than *Zombies*, where he's essentially used as a *deus ex machina*.



This is not a K. Gordon Murray production, but rumor has it that the dubbing was done at Soundlabs in Coral Gables, Florida, where the later Murray versions were made. However, in *The Invasion of the Zombies* El Santo is called “The Saint,” versus the two K. Gordon Murray films where he’s referred to as “Samson.” While the dubbing isn’t bad, there are a few clinkers. For example, when Lorena Velázquez learns that her father has been converted into a zombie, she turns to the villain and shouts: “You hyena! You ruthless dog!” (in the original, it’s “*Canalla! Asesino!*” a phrase that’s looped twice, which also occurs with one line of the villain’s dialogue). The packagers of this one didn’t spend a lot on frills: the opening credits are very short and superimposed over a shot of Santo in the ring (whereas Murray sometimes used the original credits art), and the end card is the original (Spanish) one!

*The Invasion of the Zombies* was released to television in 1966 by Television Enterprises Corporation (later Commonwealth United Entertainment) as part of their 10-film “Science-Fiction Package.” Most of the titles in this package were from Mexico: 6 “Neutrón” features (although one—*Neutron vs. the Invisible Killers*—was

actually *El asesino invisible*, a non-Neutrón movie), *H.G. Wells’ New Invisible Man* (*El hombre que logró ser invisible*), *Return from the Past* (a non-Mexican film), and *The Incredible Face of Dr. B* (*Rostro infernal*—although Kit Parker Films listed the English-language version on their website, it’s not available and may have been a subtitled version, as an English-dubbed print has been so far impossible to locate).

*Santo contra los zombies* is reasonably well-produced. There is, oddly enough, one brief dialogue scene filmed against a back-projected street image, which seems rather odd since a fair amount of location shooting was done. Back projections are also used for dialogue scenes in cars, but this is more normal (the film doesn’t go to the extremes that *El barón del terror* does, using obvious back projections and minimalist studio sets for almost all exteriors). The sets are adequate, with the best being the grotto where the zombies are kept, which is quite atmospheric. To get to the mad doctor’s lab, there is a long, spiral staircase, which is also lit and shot in a very nice manner (at the film’s end, Santo slowly walks up the staircase and leaves).

The wrestling scenes, aside from some cutaways and several shots of Santo being carried into the ring, seem to have been shot in the studio: only the first several rows of spectators are shown, and the rest of the background is all black. This is in contrast to some Santo movies, where the matches were shot before live crowds in real arenas. The film opens with a scene in which Santo and a lot of other wrestlers chase each other around the ring, then there is a long match between Santo and Black Shadow, allegedly for the middleweight title (Santo has the championship



belt). There are two other matches, with the last one being plot-related: Fernando Osés is a zombie wrestler who’s being remote-controlled by the villain. The villain turns up the power too high, and Osés’s body starts to smoke, then he screams and collapses in the ring!

Unfortunately, Benito Alazraki's direction of the non-wrestling fight scenes--Santo versus the zombies in various locations--is uninspired, to say the least. The fights are all clumsy and slow, the camera usually stationary, and there is no kinetic cutting to heighten the impact. Instead, Santo and various wrestlers-playing-zombies (and wearing Peter Pan-style outfits, minus the hats) push each other around in a half-hearted fashion. Santo also appears to be hampered by the cape he wears. The best fight is the climax, where Santo tangles with two hooded villains (all the better to allow wrestlers to substitute for villains Carlos Agosti and Ramón Bugarini) in their lab, but even this isn't very excitingly filmed.

As noted before, the film begins with several wrestling bouts. Afterwards, police agents Isabel and Sanmartín arrive at the arena and inform Rodríguez, another detective who is a wrestling fan, that they're needed at headquarters. Gloria Sandoval tells them her father, a famous scientist who has been studying zombies in Haiti, has disappeared. At the Sandoval house, they meet Gloria's uncle Genaro, blinded in an accident, and Rogelio, the butler. They promise to do what they can.



Three zombies, controlled by a hooded figure via radio, break into a jewelry store, knock out the watchman (who shoots one of them in the forehead with no effect), and use a strange device (shaped like a crowbar) to burn open the safe. As the zombies leave with their booty, agents of the security service, responding to the alarm, try to stop them but are easily subdued. Police inspector Almada has a hard time believing the men's story, but he calls Santo on his radio/TV phone to ask for help. [Santo later uses this device to eavesdrop on Almada's office and on the hooded villain, with no explanation.] Rodríguez decides to ask Santo for help in tracing Gloria's father: "[He's] not only a wrestler, he's kind of a crime fighter. "

Sanmartín and Isabel try to trace the stolen jewelry by contacting Povetti, a former fence who now runs a nightclub (time out for a dance number). Povetti claims he

doesn't know anything about it, but is later found dead. Santo learns, via his TV system, that zombies are being sent to kidnap some children at the city orphanage (to use for experiments!); he arrives and prevents this. Sanmartín, Isabel, and Rodríguez arrive (but no uniformed cops, maybe they're all on their dinner break). The zombies knock out all three heroes (Isabel stays in the car), and drive off. Santo and others pursue, but the head villain blows up the zombie-car by remote control.

Santo later saves Isabel from a couple of zombies. The villain decides to kill Santo in the ring: his minions kidnap wrestler Dorrel, who is converted into a zombie. As Santo wrestles



him in a match, Dorrel gets overheated, smokes, screams, and collapses. Santo notices his opponent was wearing a metallic belt like the zombies wear. He goes to Dorrel's apartment to search for clues, and 2 more zombies jump him. They almost pull off his mask (Santo gapes as one zombie goes haywire after a kick in the belt--Santo's eyes bulge and his mouth hangs open foolishly, most of his lower face exposed). The zombies flee.

Gloria is kidnaped and taken to zombie headquarters. She sees her father, an old, fat zombie. Rodríguez, Sanmartín, and Isabel are captured by more zombies. Santo arrives to save Gloria (wisely taking off his cape for once), fighting the hooded villain and his sidekick. The sidekick accidentally stabs himself with a knife; the main villain falls against his lab equipment and is (of course) electrocuted. The zombies all smoke, shake, collapse, then vanish (including Gloria's father). The villain is exposed as Genaro (who wasn't blind after all, what a surprise), his assistant was Rogelio. Santo leaves.

One major flaw in the picture's premise is the nature of the zombies themselves. They're created scientifically, using metal head-gear and an injection, so there's no supernatural element (and thus the reference to Gloria's father studying zombies in Haiti seems irrelevant). More importantly, the zombies are identified as criminals who were dead and have been revived (one of the policeman even says he saw one of them undergo an autopsy). [An inside joke: the chief of detectives and Sanmartín identify "Firpo," "Morgan" and other dead criminals as zombies, using these wrestlers' real names.] But, the two instances in which we see the villain create (or attempt to create) a zombie both use verifiably live subjects (wrestler Dorell



and Gloria). So unless the villain has some sort of 2-step process (first killing the person, then reviving them), these scenes are difficult to reconcile with what we've been told before (and after).



The zombies are not really frightening. They're dressed in tights and short tunics, walk in a rather stiff and amusing fashion, and are played by middle-aged (or older) wrestlers with battered and worn faces (an occupational legacy).

Another odd and yet amusing aspect—which is repeated in more than one Mexican film—are the omniscient television sets possessed by both El Santo and the masked villain. These device can apparently show anyone, anywhere, at any time. There are several scenes of Santo watching the plot unfold that last only a few seconds—and

he *does* nothing about what he's seeing. You wonder why Santo didn't tune in on the hooded villain and watch him until he removed his mask, to determine his



true identity (of course, the villain could have done the same thing to Santo, presumably, but the filmic Santo has no "secret identity," and virtually always wears his mask, so discovering what his face looks like isn't going to do you much good).

The goal of the villain is never stated. He sends his zombies to rob a jewelry store, so he wants money, right? But then he sends zombies to abduct children from an orphanage, "for his experiments." What?

Armando Silvestre and Jaime Fernández are satisfactory in their roles; Lorena Velázquez doesn't have

much to do, nor does Carlos Agosti. Irma Serrano, in her first film role, is almost unrecognizable for those familiar with "La Tigresa's" later pictures (she's pre-nose job, for one thing), but is adequate.

Trivia note: El Santo drives two cars in this film, a 1956 Chevrolet Corvette and a 1955 Ford Thunderbird. Presumably these were his personal vehicles, as in later films he was also partial to fancy sports cars.

A significant improvement over Santo's first two films, *Santo contra los zombies* is mildly entertaining, foreshadowing wilder adventures to come.



**La invasión de los muertos** [The Invasion of the Dead] (Productor Fílmica Real-Prods. Nova, 1971) *Prod:* René Cardona Jr., Enrique Rosas G.; *Dir-Scr:* René Cardona Sr.; *Story:* René Cardona Jr.; *Photo:* José Ortiz Ramos; *Music:* Raúl Lavista; *Prod Chief:* Fidel Pizarro; *Asst Dir:* Winfield Sánchez; *Film Ed:* Alfredo Rosas Priego; *Art Dir:* Alberto de Guevara; *Décor:* Carlos Arjona; *Lighting:* Fernando Calvillo; *Camera Op:* Manuel González; *Makeup:* Ana María Soriano; *Sound Op:* Manuel Topete; *Sound Ed:* Abraham Cruz; *Re-rec:* Salvador Topete; *Union:* STPC

**Cast:** Zovek (*himself*), Blue Demon (*himself*), Christa Linder (*Erika*), Raúl Ramírez (*Professor Bruno Volpi*), Carlos Cardán (*rancher*), Polo Ortín (*Blue Demon's ass't.*), Ángel Paniagua, Gonzalo García, Roberto Y. Palacios (*cemetery watchman*), Armando Acosta (*police official*), Ramón Menéndez (*helicopter pilot*), Guillermo Ayala, Eduardo Bonada, Francisco Fernández, Gerardo Zepeda (*"wolfman"*), René Barrera (*man who found headless body*), Alfonso Carti (*policeman*), William Jordan, Carl Linder, César Silva

**Notes:** this film has a better reputation in some quarters than it perhaps deserves. While it had the potential to be a decent picture--the first Zovek movie was fairly entertaining--*La invasión de los muertos* is rather disjointed and not very good. Part (much?) of this can be attributed to the radical revisions required after the death of Zovek in a non-film related accident, Oddly enough, García Riera says production began on the film in



November 1971, yet Zovek did not die until March 1972; there is no way the movie took three months to shoot: even three weeks would be a stretch. Some sources say production was paused or interrupted and that's when Zovek was killed. Or perhaps someone (René Cardona Sr., I'm looking at you) badly miscalculated how much footage he'd have to shoot to make a feature film (unlikely, given that Cardona had been directing since the 1930s). A third possibility is that the film was always intended to be a Zovek-Blue Demon team-up, although this doesn't explain why the two heroes never physically meet, or why (as noted below), the two heroes face off against two different types of menaces.

While the Zovek sections of the movie (the majority of the film) are fairly good, the added scenes with Blue Demon and Polo Ortín are awful: mostly shot in some kind of factory (Blue's "secret crime lab," I guess), they are static and boring. People report odd happenings to Blue Demon (a flying saucer, a headless corpse), and he proceeds to lecture them about the historical precedents of such events! Sometimes Blue will "talk" to Zovek on the phone, to try and link up the two threads of the plot, but not even the "monsters" are the same. In the Zovek scenes, the walking dead are the revived (if slightly decayed) corpses of normal people (a fair number of them appear to have died in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, based on their costumes)--in one scene there must be at least 75 of these zombies chasing Zovek, a very impressive sight. Blue Demon, on the other hand, has to face a handful of Hollywood-style monsters (such as a

wolfman, a vampire, and a burly black guy with fangs who also appeared in the first Zovek movie). At least these latter Blue Demon scenes have some movement, unlike the boring "lab" sequences where people just stand around and talk.

*La invasión de los muertos* begins with a pre-credits sequence in which a narrator rambles on about life in the universe, yadda yadda. The sequence concludes with a quote from the Bible (Genesis 22). Then we see Zovek, speeding down the highway on a motorcycle. A few miles ahead of him, two policemen watch a huge fireball disappear over a hill; they get out of their car to investigate. Zovek sees the abandoned police car: he stops, hears several shots, and discovers the dead bodies of the cops. This sequence leads nowhere: what was the fireball? The real alien device (a large black globe) doesn't land until later in the picture.

A cattle rancher, pursuing a cougar that killed one of his cows, spots some odd paintings on the side of a cliff. He reports his discovery to visiting scientist Professor Volpi and his daughter Erika (Raúl Ramírez, without his usual moustache, and Christa Linder, looking good as always). They make plans to visit the site in a few days. For some reason, Erika thinks Zovek can help, and she and the Professor go to the city to see him.



A portion of Zovek's act is then shown: he's put into a strait jacket and locked in a mummy case, which is then set on fire. He escapes at the last moment. This sequence takes place on the same set and with the same cast (including Zovek's hooded assistants, among them three attractive women) as the water escape in *El increíble Profesor Zovek*.

Intercut with the Zovek sequences are the Blue Demon scenes. A pilot reports seeing a UFO, another man says he found a headless body but it later vanished. Blue's assistant Polo Ortín makes wisecracks and mugs for the camera (Blue keeps telling him to shut up—echoing the audience's sentiments exactly).

Zovek, the Professor, and Erika are dropped in the wilderness by a helicopter (ironic, given that in real-life Zovek died in a fall from a helicopter); they hike the rest of the way to the cliff with the paintings on it. Zovek, who



learned mystic powers (like mind-reading) in Tibet, says he believes the paintings are a warning to humanity from a Tibetan lama. Sure enough, a big black sphere lands on earth and its mysterious powers cause the dead to rise from their graves during a rainstorm (one of the film's best sequences).



The zombies in *La invasión de los muertos* are murderous, and they also retain some of their pre-death abilities (they can fly helicopters, drive trucks, and so forth). Zovek and the others are chased around by the dead; in one scene, Zovek fights the zombies in a cavern, falls into an underground river, and swims out, narrowly avoiding being swept over a waterfall. In the Blue Demon sequences, a handful of monsters attack some soldiers.

The soldiers come back as zombies and Blue Demon has to fight them and the monsters (Polo Ortín fools them by pretending to be a zombie himself—perhaps René Cardona Sr. had recently seen *Mantan Moreland* in *Revenge of the Zombies*).

The Professor is killed by the zombies and returns to life as one of them (a not-very surprising "shock" scene). Zovek and Erika are chased by a lot of zombies (including a zombie flying a helicopter). Finally, Zovek crashes a pickup truck into a electric-line pylon, causing the high-tension wires to fall on the black sphere (which, as we saw earlier, only comes up to Zovek's waist). It blows up real good, and the walking dead all stop walking (in fact, they fall down).

However, Zovek tells Erika he's afraid the same thing will happen elsewhere on earth (a reassuring conclusion).

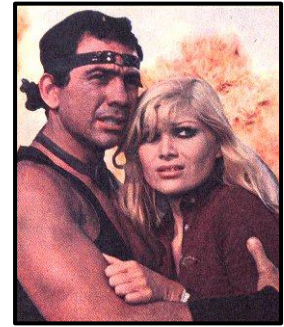
The Zovek part of *La invasión de los muertos* is more or less complete: that is to say, the Blue Demon scenes do not fill in any gaps in the plot, they only expand the

running time. It's a shame the filmmakers couldn't have done a better job matching the style of the original footage, and an even greater shame that Zovek didn't live to finish the picture.



## WHO WAS PROFESSOR ZOVEK?

While heroes such as El Santo and Blue Demon had long and successful careers in Mexican films, there were other characters who appeared briefly and then disappeared from the screen forever. These include radio/comic book character Kalimán (Jeff Cooper), who appeared in only two movies, and Professor Zovek (Javier Chapa del Bosque), who made only one and a half films before his sudden death in 1972.



Francisco Javier Chapa del Bosque was born in Mexico in 1941. He began his career at an early age as a magician and escape artist, and spent years working in small circuses, developing and refining his act. Two examples of his stunts--shot at the same time on the same nightclub set--appear in Zovek's films. In the first scene, he is tied up and dumped in a tank of water. In the second, he is put in a strait-jacket and locked in a flaming Egyptian mummy case. Zovek's showmanship is evident in these scenes, from his gold lamé costume to his gang of beefy male assistants in black, wrestler-style masks, and his three female associates, including one in a black bikini and executioner's hood.



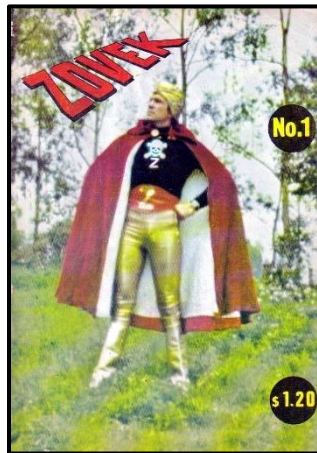
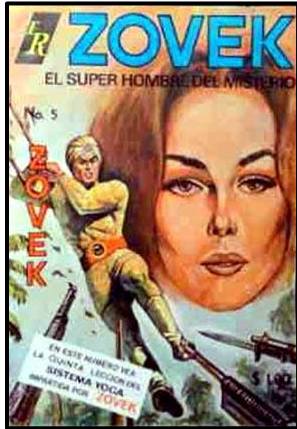
Zovek first gained national attention on television, and in 1971 contracted to make films for Producciones Nova and Productora Filmica Re-AI. A very athletic individual, Zovek also signed to make some records promoting

exercise and physical fitness, and was the “star” of several comic books, one with drawn art and the other in *foto-comic* format.

Zovek's first film was *El increíble Profesor Zovek*, directed by René Cardona Sr., and co-starring Tere Velázquez and Germán Valdés "Tin Tan" (as Zovek's chauffeur). Fairly well put together, the film deals with Zovek's battle against a mad scientist (José Gálvez) who has created a batch of monsters (including cannibal dwarves) in his quest to conquer the world by harnessing brain waves. In one gruesome scene, one of Zovek's assistants (Nubia Marti), captured by the scientist, has her skull sawed open and wires inserted into her exposed brain. At the end, Zovek, Tin Tan, and Velázquez escape, while Gálvez is eaten by the cannibal dwarves.

The followup to Zovek's film debut was *La invasión de los muertos*. The plot was a variation on George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (which itself owed something to 1958's *Invisible Invaders*): a strange sphere from outer space lands and causes the corpses of the dead to reanimate and walk the earth. Zovek comes to the aid of a scientist (Raúl Ramírez) and his daughter (Christa Linder), and eventually blows up the sphere, saving the world. In both Zovek films, he is portrayed as a psychic who uses telepathy and hypnotism to fight evil (although he is quite capable of delivering some karate chops and kicks as well).

Profesor Zovek was apparently unable to complete *La invasión de los muertos* due to his untimely death on 10 March 1972. He had been hired by the Suárez Brothers Circus to promote their appearance in the town of Cuautitlán, a few miles north of Mexico City. By 6 o'clock in the afternoon, nearly 4,000 people were gathered in the park where the circus tent had been erected. Around 6:30, a helicopter appeared and began to hover over the site. Zovek stepped out of the cabin and began climbing down a rope towards the ground. However, before he reached the earth, the helicopter



suddenly ascended and began to circle the park, with Zovek still clinging to the rope. A short time later, apparently weakened by the chilly winds, Zovek lost his grip on the rope and fell 100 feet to the ground, landing in a plowed field. Although he was taken to a nearby hospital, the performer died several hours later of a fractured skull and internal injuries.

Javier Chapa del Bosque was buried in the Actors Section of the Jardín cemetery on 12 March 1972. "Born Free," which he had adopted as his theme song, was played as hundreds of mourners bid farewell to the "Mexican Houdini." Although he died young, Zovek left behind two filmed demonstrations of his showmanship, athletic ability, and talent.



## Ladronas de almas

[Soul-Stealers]  
(Prendeyapaga Films,  
©2015) Exec Prod:  
Cucuy Odriozola; Prod:  
Cucuy Odriozola; Assoc  
Prod: Marcela Odriozola  
Guajardo, Paloma  
Padilla Silva; Prod Dir:  
Daniel Alonso; Dir: Juan  
Antonio de la Riva; Scr:  
Christopher Luna;  
Photo: Alberto Lee;  
Music: Diego Herrera,  
Leoncio Lara Bon; Prod  
Mgr: Isaac Betancourt,  
Irving Conde, Ernesto  
Martínez; Asst Dir:



Mario Guerrero; Film Ed: Oscar Figueroa Jara; Art Dir: Eduardo López; Set Decor: Marlene Rodríguez; Spec FX Makeup Design: Juan Méndez, Karina E. Monroy; Spec FX: Pedro González; Direct Sound: Miguel Sandoval; Sound Des: Miguel Ángel Molina; Union: Técnicos y Manuales; filmed in Oaxtepec, Hacienda de Oacalco\*, Hacienda de Coahuixtla\*\* (state of Morelos) \*[also seen in *Bad Boys for Life*, 2020] \*\*[also seen in *La Generala* and *Campanas rojas*]

Cast: Sofía Sisniega (*María Cordero*), Natasha Dupeyrón (*Roberta Cordero*), Ana Sofía Durán (*Camila Cordero*), Riccardo Dalmacci (*don Agustín Cordero*), Javier Escobar (*Odilón*), Luis Gatica (*Macario*), Juan Ángel Esparza (*Torcuato Reyes*), Jorge Luis Moreno (*Artemio "El albino"*), Arnulfo Reyes Sánchez (*Jacinto*), Tizoc Arroyo (*Patricio "El tuerto"*), José Enot (*Cecilio*), Harding Junior (*Indalesio*), Claudine Sosa (*Ignacia*), Pablo Valentín (*Capt. Tomás Arroyo*), Marcela Odriozola



(Ana María Cordero), Estanislao Martínez Marín & José Antonio Aviña Parra (*zombies*)

**Notes:** I had never heard of *Ladronas de almas* and stumbled across it completely by accident. It premiered in 2015 at the Feratun Film Fest, and (according to IMDB) got a “limited” theatrical release in Mexico in 2017. It’s a very well-made and good-looking film with an interesting premise, but offers few surprises.



A printed prologue indicates “This film is inspired by real events in the life of María Cordero, a valiant woman that...took up arms to defend her land.” It’s unclear if the real-life María Cordero had zombie henchmen or not. [This aspect of her life might be an invention of screenwriter Christopher Luna, who produced and directed the *videohome El Fantástico vs. El Nahual*—reviewed in MFB Volume 19 Number 5 (Sept-Oct-Nov 2013)—a well-intentioned but not very well-executed picture.]

In 1815, during Mexico’s war for independence against Spain, a group of seven “insurgents” led by Torcuato arrives at the *hacienda* of the Corderos. Although the estate looks ruined and deserted, don Agustín, his daughters María, Roberta, and Camila, and two servants (Indalesio and Ignacia) are in residence. The visitors claim they’re fleeing the Royalists and only want a place to spend the night. Royalist troops led by Captain Arroyo had previously sacked the *hacienda*, wounding don Agustín, killing his wife, and dragging María away prisoner. Indalesio warns the men not to leave the *hacienda* at night, because the “living dead” emerge to kill anyone they find, but he’s not believed.

The visitors aren’t insurgents, they’re actually Royalist troops sent to find out what happened to Capt. Arroyo and his men, who were carrying a large amount of gold to finance their fight. The *hacienda* has a secret (revealed gradually). María escaped after Capt. Arroyo and his men were all slain by zombies. She was rescued by Indalesio, who—because his grandfather was a voodoo “bokor”—knows zombies can only be killed by having their heads chopped off. Indalesio says the local landowners used zombies as slave labour, then abandoned

them when the revolution against Spain broke out and the wealthy *hacendados* fled. Arroyo becomes a zombie and guards the treasure for the Cordero family.

Most of the false insurgents are murdered, either by the Cordero daughters or by zombies; Indalesio is also killed. Odilón is apparently the only survivor, and he unwisely decides to stick around and try to steal the gold. He fights zombie-Arroyo to a standstill, but discovers the chests of treasure have been emptied. He (also unwisely) drinks a gourd-full of (drugged) *aguardiente* conveniently left on a table, and passes out. María and Roberta turn him into a zombie.

As it turns out, his comrade Macario was only unconscious, and now wakes up. Youngest sister Camila—who’s been mute since the death of her mother—regains her voice, calls her sister, and bites Macario! María then stabs him to death. As the film concludes, Odilón and Macario are the new “guard dogs” of the treasure.

One problem with *Ladronas de almas*—aside from its predictability—is the lack of sympathetic protagonists. The Cordero sisters have been scarred by the war, but they really aren’t

shown to be helpless victims: instead, they’re depicted as dangerous, scheming murderers.



A little more character development or reflection would have softened their characters or at least provided some additional insight into their emotional states. Just having one of them say “We’re forced to do these horrible things to defend ourselves” would have gone a long way. The intruders aren’t sympathetic, either. They’re not even Mexican “patriots” fighting for freedom, they’re Royalist soldiers, assigned to recover a missing treasure. They threaten don Agustín—who uses a wheelchair after being shot by Capt. Arroyo—and his family, kill Indalesio when he tries to intervene, and Torcuato himself attempts to rape María. The audience has no particular reason to hope any of them escape from the death-trap.

The performances are fine. The only performer I was familiar with is Luis Gatica, who’s been around for a while (he’s the son of singer Lucho Gatica and actress Mapita Cortés), although it turns out Sofía Sisniega was in *Mentada de padre*, which I have seen, and it’s possible some of the other actors have also been in movies I’ve watched but I just didn’t remember them. Harding Junior,

born in Haiti but raised in Mexico (which meshes exactly with his fictional character’s back-story), plays Indalesio (the only sympathetic character in the whole movie).

*Ladronas de almas* (not the best title, but more or less accurate) was shot on some authentic locations in the state of Morelos, and looks pretty great. The name of cinematographer Alberto Lee was familiar to me from his work on numerous *videohomes*; he’s done a lot of documentaries and a number of theatrical features as well. I have no complaints about the “look” of the film—special effects makeup, costumes, etc., are all quite fine. Too bad a bit more tinkering wasn’t done on the script.

But overall, *Ladronas de almas* is slick and mildly interesting.



## NARCOSATÁNICOS AND OTHER DEMONIC DOINGS



**Guerreros diabólicos** [Diabolical Warriors] (Mexcinema Video Corp. & Prods. Moon, 1991) *Dir:* Eusebio Luna Walliser; *Adapt:* Eusebio Luna Walliser, Febronio Teposte [sic\*]; *Story:* Carlos Canto; *Photo:* Febronio Teposte G.; *Asst Dir:* Martín Beltrán; *Asst Cam:* Fermín Hernández; *Makeup:* Margarita Manzano; *Sound:* Gabriela Espinoza

\*[spelled correctly (Tepozte) on end credits]

**Cast:** Jorge Reynoso (*Comandante*), Claudia Guzmán (*Charo*), Julio Augurio (*Dr. Calderón*), Wally Barrón (*cult priest*), Ernesto Rivas (*Danilo*), Sonia Bayardo (*priestess*), Paco Pharrez (*Numa González*), Carlos Canto

(*Kobani*), Martín Beltrán (*first man*), Luz María Carrillo (*nurse 2*), Stephanie [Stephany on end credits] Evans (*nurse 1*), Carlos Marvez (*agent of Ministerio Público*), Sergio Morante (*agent of Preliminary Investigations*), Elena [spelled Helena on end credits] Novi (*secretary 1*), Oralia Olvera (*Charo’s mother*), Javier Puga (*police agent Zárate*), Mauricio Rubi (*Rebeca’s father*), Lidia Solano (*social worker, Gloria Venegas*), Cruz Leal & Martha Silvia (*florist’s customers*) [cut?], Gretha Yahaira (*Rebeca’s mother*), Germán Blandó (*morgue doctor*), Cristina Garay (*Rebeca*)

**Notes:** in the late 1980s, a “cult” of so-called *narcosatánicos* operating in Matamoros was responsible for the death of various individuals (15 bodies were later discovered on their ranch) in various brutal ways, culminating with the murder of a U.S. university student visiting Mexico on spring break. This caused an international uproar and cult leader Adolfo Constanzo, his “priestess” Sara Aldrete, and some of their group fled to Mexico City. In May 1989, surrounded by the police in the *colonia* Cuauhtémoc, Constanzo ordered one of his followers to kill him, and the rest of the *narcosatánicos* were arrested.



The Satanic cult theme was quickly turned into pop culture fodder, with *Narcosatánicos diabólicos* going into production a mere month after Constanzo’s death, in June 1989. This film’s plot was not really based on the actual case--the *videohome* *La secta de la muerte* (1990) followed the original story much more closely. *Guerreros diabólicos* came out in 1991. *Terror, sexo y brujería* (1984) was released on VHS in the USA as *Narco Satánico*. *Policia de homicidios* (1992) is also vaguely related, as its alternate title—*Vudu, rito mortal*—might suggest. Alex de la Iglesia used the basic premise for 1997’s *Perdita Durango*. The story still has legs, as *Borderland* (2007, a U.S.-Mexican co-production) and the 2020 HBO Max series “Brujo” suggest.

[There was even a short-lived comic book (which debuted in June 1989) titled “Los Narcosatánicos!” which contained satirical stories about celebrities allegedly involved with the cult.]

As the film begins, a nurse is murdered by a patient in a mental hospital. The face of the killer isn’t shown, but we’re later informed it was Numa González, a criminal judged insane and institutionalised. However,



some doubt is cast on this--Numa denies he ever killed anyone and seems sincere, and when a social worker and nurse are later slain, the murderer's face is again hidden--adding a somewhat unexpected "mystery" aspect to the plot (although the big reveal occurs fairly early in the film



rather than at the end, and the killer is fairly obvious by then anyway). Numa joins his pals at a Satanic ritual held in a mountain

cave; the ritual doesn't have very good security, since university students Charo and her pals Danilo and Kobani (both rocking permed mullets) walk right in (not even bothering to don robes like the other sect members). Numa tells the cult's priest that Charo has been chosen to be the "next" victim.

Police commander ? (his character isn't given a name, so we'll call him Cmdte. Jorge for the purposes of this review) is in charge of tracking down Numa, as well as investigating the disappearance of various young women in the city.

A social worker who arranged for Numa to be sent to the mental hospital turns out to be in league with the devil worshipper, but is murdered after she threatens to expose him. [Fortunately, she had the foresight to record her conversation with Numa, and Cmdte. Jorge's assistant Zárte later finds the tape.] A nurse with "evidence" about the hospital killing is also slain, and Dr. Calderón is the (now) obvious suspect. A young woman abducted by the cult escapes but the rest of the captives and their captors flee before the police arrive.



Charo is plagued with bad dreams about the Satanic sect, but is determined to "investigate" it (for her class?), and convinces Danilo and Kobani to help. However, she's snatched off the street by the cult one night, even though she and her friends were already planning to attend a fancy gambling party being held by the sect in a local coffee shop's banquet room. Numa is going to sell the young women abductees (not Charo) into white slavery overseas. "We're working for the Dragon Organisation," Numa says, and will soon be relocating to

the provinces. Danilo and Kobani sneak in to the party, and Dr. Calderón also arrives (wearing dark glasses so he won't be recognised, I suppose). Calderón absconds with a briefcase full of cash paid by the "Dragons" to Numa (fortunately for Calderón, he'd coincidentally brought an identical briefcase with him, so the switch is easy) and departs.

What do you know, the card party turns into a cult meeting, as Charo is brought out (wearing a white gown) and placed on a table in the front of the room. Danilo sends Kobani for the cops, then interrupts the ceremony. Numa puts the evil-eye whammy on



Danilo, and all of the cult members flee, leaving Charo (who wasn't sacrificed, just given something to drink) and a dazed Danilo behind. Numa and his two assistants open the briefcase left by Calderón—it's full of white smoke that...kills them? (It's unclear if it blows up or is poison gas.) Calderón drives away, laughing, but has visions of Numa and the others and wrecks his car, dying in the fiery crash. [Cmdte. Jorge gets news of this, and also learns a truck carrying the kidnaped women has been detained.]

[Among the many loose ends in *Guerreros diabólicos* is the exact role Dr. Calderón plays in the plot. Presumably he deliberately allowed Numa to escape, and kills the social worker to protect the cult (the first nurse is murdered for no particular reason, and the third is killed to prevent her from providing proof about Calderón's involvement in the first murder). But then he steals the money and murders the cult leaders?]

As the film concludes, the sect is having another



ceremony in their cave lair, but now the priest and priestess are...Charo and Danilo! (Kobani apparently wasn't invited, presumably because he didn't drink the potion or get hypnotised by Numa.)

*Guerreros diabólicos* isn't a very good film. Although running only about 75 minutes, it nonetheless wastes a lot of time with various pointless scenes. There are a few

surprisingly nice (or at least competent) directorial touches, camera angles, etc. Eusebio Luna Walliser does not have a very extensive filmography (3 credits on IMDB), and I don't know what he did before or since. The production values are low, but the filmmakers don't really try to do anything ambitious so there aren't any gaffes (which would have been at least amusing).

The biggest problem with *Guerreros diabólicos* is the script. The film alternates between three plot threads: (1) Cmdte. Jorge and his assistant trying to solve the initial murder; (2) Numa and the sect's priest (Wally Barrón, yet another character with no name) plotting; (3) Charo and her 2 friends trying to infiltrate the cult. Not much happens in any of these, and what does happen is mostly senseless. A film featuring a Satanic cult, 3 on-screen murders, white slavery, and the Asian Mafia shouldn't be boring. Even worse, the fantasy and/or exploitative content is minimal. Only in the last few moments does anything remotely supernatural occur—Charo drinks a magic potion, Danilo is mentally zapped, and Calderón sees visions.

As the Trash-Mex website points out (<https://www.trash-mex.com/2015/04/Guerreros-Diabolicos-1991.html>), Jorge Reynoso collected a paycheck for this film without exerting himself unduly. Not only does his character not have a given name, his actions during the picture do not resolve anything (in fact, the second and third women murdered are literally killed because they contacted him). His assistant has almost as much screen time as Reynoso, and is actually shown doing more “investigating” (not that he solves any crimes, either).

The performances in *Guerreros diabólicos* are adequate, although once you get beyond the core of professionals in the cast (Reynoso, Barrón, Pharrez, Guzmán, Rivas, Canto) the quality of acting drops off somewhat. It doesn't really matter, because no one has a lot to do. Claudia Guzmán, despite what some web sources claim, is not the daughter of actor Flaco Guzmán, but his niece (her father was Jesús Guzmán, Flaco's brother, and her mother was actress Gloria Silva). Claudia Guzmán had about a 20-year career from the late '70s through the late '90s—she's certainly cute here, but as noted has no particular personality other than “determined to investigate the cult and dragging her friends along.” No one else displays much enthusiasm or energy.



Considering I'd waited for years to see this film, I'd have to rate it: disappointing.



**El estrangulador de la rosa\*** [The Strangler of the Rose] (Prods. Torrente, 1990) *Exec Prod:* Víctor Vera A.; *Prod:* Rubén Galindo; *Dir:* Arturo Velazco; *Scr:* Arturo Velazco, Miguel Mora; *Story:* Raúl Galindo; *Photo:* Germán Salcedo; *Music:* Claudio González, Juan Carlos Gutiérrez; *Assoc Prod:* Frank Cinelli; *Prod Mgr:* Max G. Lladó; *Asst Dir:* Javier Vera, Fernando A. de Florida; *Film Ed:* Marco Antonio González; *Sound Engin:* Noé Rincón; *Recordist:* Rodolfo Gutiérrez

\* spelled *El extrangulador de la rosa* on-screen

**Cast:** Susana Dosamantes (*Lt. Paola Luna*), Carlos Cardán (*Prod. Ciro Ruiz*), Rosario Escobar (*Lt. Laura Olmos*), Imperio Vargas (*Rebeca*), Juan Peláez (*Capt. Montoya*), Amado Zumaya (*Dr. Othón Henner*), Rubén Márquez P. (*priest*), Claudia Sánchez (*secretary*), Luis Erazo (*El Viejo*), Eduardo Ocaña & Alejandro Ávila (*pimps*), Claudio Sorel (*El Pollo*), Magda Giner (*student*), Inés Murillo (*old woman*), Estéfani Evans (*young prostitute*), *prostitutes:* Magda Rodríguez, Elena Novi, Alexandra Loreto, Sonia Bayardo, Patty Bolaños, Cristina Ocampo, Marina Fernández; *cult members:* Genaro Zárate, Vicente Huevo, Guillermo Ruiz, Mauricio Rubi, Edwin Manuel, Miguel Ángel Heredia, Gustavo Campos, Tony Sánchez, José Luis de Alba, Ismael Oviedo

**Notes:** it's always amusing to see spelling errors or inconsistencies on film credits, but it's kind of a shock when the title of the film is misspelled! *Cazadores de*



*espías* (instead of *Cazadores de espías*) and *El estrangulador de la rosa* are two examples of this carelessness.

A stranger murders a prostitute and leaves a yellow rose by her corpse. Lt. Paola asks to be assigned to the case, and is given 5 days to solve it (her supervisor, Capt. Montoya, says “a man could solve it in 3”). Paola and her assistant Rebeca are joined by colleague Laura, who volunteers to serve as bait. Because Mexico City is a small place and there are very few prostitutes around (sarcasm), Laura is attacked on her very first night. She survives, and manages to tear a button from her assailant’s coat as a clue.

The button has a distinctive design, but none of the local button-makers can identify it. Paola is directed to



university professor Henner, a specialist in symbols. But before she can visit him, Paola and Laura are walking the beat and the strangler strikes again,

about 50 feet behind them! [Note: the strangler is only seen in silhouette, but his trilby hat and overcoat make it look like Inspector Gadget is the murderer. He also wears black leather gloves, suggesting he’s a *giallo* fan.] Paola pursues the killer and shoots at him, but he escapes.

The next day, Paola and Rebeca try to interview Prof.

Henner, who is (a) ill-tempered, and (b) has an injured arm. Red herring alert! Their next stop is Dr. Ruiz, an absent-minded anthropologist. Ruiz says the symbol on the button was associated with a



14<sup>th</sup>-century European sect that “committed many crimes,” killing “women sinners,” but the members were all caught and executed 500 years ago.

2 more murders occur, in widely separated areas of the city on the same night. Montoya threatens to take Paola off the case. Prof. Henner agrees to talk, and says the last time the button symbol was seen was the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in Puebla. A sect judged and killed sinful

women, but was wiped out by the angry townspeople “and nothing more was ever heard of them.” Henner then refers them back to Ruiz, who says “Henner doesn’t know anything,” and brushes them off.

That night, the killer tosses a corpse off a building—it lands right in front of Paola, Laura and Rebeca, but the strangler vanishes. Meanwhile, some guys in a VW bus abduct two streetwalkers and speed off. Paola and her team believe the sect has revived and is escalating its activities. Henner and Ruiz are suspects.



Laura is kidnaped from her apartment and taken to a cave where robed men and abducted women are involved in some sort of rite. The next day, Paola and Laura discover black leather gloves and a garrotte in Ruiz’s desk. Visiting Laura’s apartment, they find signs she was taken prisoner. Ruiz’s day-planner refers to a meeting at the “temple,” and Paola remembers that Henner said the cult operated in Puebla. Henner produces a book that identifies roughly where the cult met (in a grotto near a monastery).

Rather than call in reinforcements, Paola and Rebeca drive to Puebla. Luckily, they find a helpful priest who knows exactly where the monastery and grotto are located. They crash the ceremony, freeing the captives (including Laura), despite the fact that the cult members are armed with Uzis (well, one prisoner is shot). Paola’s car is discovered and blown up, so Paola and Laura go back to the cave (!). Ruiz and his men capture and prepare to hang them. Meanwhile, the last remaining prostitute is killed outside, and Rebeca is wounded—



however, she re-enters the cave, shoots the ropes tending Paola and Laura, and then dies. The cave begins to collapse. [Well, what do you know, there was one more captive hooker in the cave, but she’s hit by a boulder and killed.] Paola and Laura are the only ones who escape.

*El estrangulador de la rosa* isn’t horrible; there are some good points and weak spots. The first two-thirds of the film are something of a *giallo* homage (with a few

atmospheric shots), while the last third veers off into murder-cult territory. Although none of the women get much personality or back-story, there are a several nice bits showing the solidarity between three female leads. For example, Rebeca finds a copy of “Signore” magazine (a Mexican version of “Playboy”) on Ruiz’s desk and smirks, then shows it to Paola, who also displays mild disgust/disdain. There are some other instances where they get a “men act so stupid” expression on their faces. While Capt. Montoya initially seems to disrespect the ability of the women police officers, and repeatedly threatens to take them off the case, he never does so and actually doesn’t criticise them unfairly. Some effort was also expended in give Ruiz and Henner distinctive personalities (although Ruiz’s is a put-on). The production values are adequate, with a decent number of actual locations that make it look more lavish than one would expect on a *videohome* budget.



On the other hand, the plot has too many illogical aspects and blind alleys. The last time the MAP (roughly “Death to Sinners” in Latin) cult was known to be operating was the 16<sup>th</sup>



century. So, where have they been all this time? Why do they suddenly begin killing prostitutes now? Why does Ruiz strangle his victims on the street instead of taking them to be judged and hung, as the original cult did (and

as they do, for no particular reason, at the climax)? Why does the cult abduct Laura—surely she doesn’t qualify as a “sinner?” (unless they’d seen Rosario Escobar in films like *El semental de Palo Alto* or *Pancho el sancho*)

The script also makes a point of showing Paola interviewing multiple shopkeepers and manufacturers about the button, but this goes nowhere, with the only useful information coming from Ruiz and Henner. Similarly, a big deal is made about two murders occurring in one night, “kilometres apart”—suggesting multiple murderers—but this is never followed up. Footage is expended early in the film showing Paola interrogating some low-lives, mostly to set her up as “tough” and the equal of any man, but neither scene means anything (and

both times she has to be alerted by Rebeca that the strangler has been busy attacking women in the meantime!).

Susana Dosamantes began acting in the late 1960s and had a substantial career in the Seventies in films and on television (she also had two children, one of whom became pop singer Paulina Rubio—Rubio starred in one film, *Bésame en la boca*, in which her mother also appeared). Her second husband was producer Carlos Vasallo, who put her in a number of his “international” action films (*Target Eagle*, *The Day of the Assassin*, and *Counterforce*). In the late ‘80s and early ‘90s (when she had just turned 40), Dosamantes starred in a handful of action films and thrillers including this one, *La metrallera*, *Rosa de la frontera*, *El placer de la venganza*, *Comando marino* (as a Mexican naval officer), *Asesinato a sangre fría*, etc. She’s fine here—although, as noted above, she isn’t given any sort of back-story or personal life—and the rest of the small cast (in terms of actual significant speaking roles) is also professional and satisfactory. Rosario Escobar must have appreciated the chance for a serious acting role, since most of her previous screen appearances were in *sexy-comedies* and involved taking her clothes off.

*El estrangulador de la rosa* is not without interest—it was one a handful of women-centric action films and *videohomes* in this period—and the production is reasonably professional (albeit on an obviously low budget), but the script holds it back.



## ARIEL AWARDS 2021

This year’s Ariel Awards were presented on 25 September 2021. The big winner of the year was *Sin señas particulares*, which took home 9 awards, including Best Film and Best Direction. The Ariel de Oro career awards were given to actress Ofelia Medina and sound engineer Fernando Cámara. [winners in **bold**]



### Best Film

*El baile de los 41*  
*Las tres muertes de Marisela Escobedo*  
*Los lobos*  
*Selva trágica*  
***Sin señas particulares***



**Best Direction**

Carlos Pérez Osorio | *Las tres muertes de Marisela Escobedo*

David Pablos | *El baile de los 41*

**Fernanda Valadez** | *Sin señas particulares*

Samuel Kishi Leopo | *Los lobos*

Yulene Olaizola | *Selva trágica*

**Best Actor**

**Alfonso Herrera** | *El baile de los 41*

Armando Espitia | *Te llevo conmigo*

Demián Bichir | *Danyka*

Fernando Cuautle | *Nuevo orden*

Juan Pablo Medina | *El club de los idealistas*

Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez | *Fauna*

**Best Actress**

Mabel Cadena | *El baile de los 41*

Martha Reyes Arias | *Los lobos*

**Mercedes Hernández** | *Sin señas particulares*

Mónica Del Carmen | *Nuevo orden*

Naian González Norvind | *Leona*

**Best Co-Starring Actor**

Christian Vázquez | *Te llevo conmigo*

**David Illescas** | *Sin señas particulares*

Eligio Meléndez | *Nuevo orden*

Emiliano Zurita | *El baile de los 41*

Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez | *Selva trágica*

**Best Co-Starring Actress**

Carolina Politi | *Leona*

**Cici Lau** | *Los lobos*

Margarita Sanz | *Leona*

Michelle Rodríguez | *Te llevo conmigo*

Nailea Norvind | *El club de los idealistas*

**Best Original Screenplay**

Carlos Pérez Osorio | *Las tres muertes de Marisela Escobedo*

**Fernanda Valadez, Astrid Rondero** | *Sin señas particulares*

Isaac Cherem, Naian González Norvind | *Leona*

Samuel Kishi Leopo, Sofía Gómez Córdova, José Luis

Briones Macías | *Los lobos*

Yulene Olaizola, Rubén Imaz Castro | *Selva trágica*

**Best Adapted Screenplay**

**Antón Goenechea** | *Perdida*

Fabián Ibarra Alemañy | *El gallinero*

Miguel Ángel Uriegas Flores | *Un disfraz para Nicolás*

**Best Cinematography**

Carolina Costa AMC | *El baile de los 41*

**Claudia Becerril Bulos** | *Sin señas particulares*

Everardo González | *Yermo*

Jorge Octavio Arauz Gómez | *Los lobos*

Sofía Oggioni | *Selva trágica*

**Best Original Music Score**

Alejandro Otaola | *Selva trágica*

Carlo Ayhllón, Andrea Balency-Béarn | *El baile de los 41*

Clarice Jensen | *Sin señas particulares*

Jacobo Lieberman | *Leona*

**Kenji Kishi Leopo** | *Los lobos*

**Best Editing**

Andrea Rabasa Jofre, Bruno Santamaría Razo | *Cosas que no hacemos*

**Fernanda Valadez, Astrid Rondero, Susan Korda** | *Sin señas particulares*

Óscar Figueroa Jara, Michel Franco | *Nuevo orden*

Ricardo Poery | *Las tres muertes de Marisela Escobedo*

Valentina Leduc, Luciana Kaplan | *La vocera*

Yordi Capó, Carlos Espinoza Benítez, Samuel Kishi

Leopo | *Los lobos*

**Best Art Direction**

Claudio Ramírez Castelli | *Nuevo orden*

Dalia Reyes | *Sin señas particulares*

**Daniela Schneider** | *El baile de los 41*

Hania Robledo | *Los lobos*

Sandra Cabriada | *Te llevo conmigo*

**Best Makeup**

Adam Zoller | *Nuevo orden*

**Alfredo "Tigre" Mora, Alejandra Velarde** | *El baile de los 41*

Gerardo Muñoz | *Selva trágica*

Neftalí Zamora, Tania Larizza Guzmán | *Sin señas particulares*

Vladimir Amok | *Rencor tatuado*

**Best Costume Design**

Gabriela Fernández | *Nuevo orden*

**Kika Lopes** | *El baile de los 41*

Nohemi González, Sheila Eden | *Los lobos*

Samuel Conde | *Selva trágica*

Ximena Guzmán | *Leona*

**Best Sound**

Alejandro de Icaza, Enrique Fernández Tanco (diseño sonoro, mezcla de sonido), Víctor Benítez Pardo (sonido directo) | *Las tres muertes de Marisela Escobedo*

**José Miguel Enríquez Rivaud (diseño sonoro), Federico González Jordan (sonido directo), Jaime Baksht, Michelle Couttolenc (mezcla de sonido)** | *Selva trágica*

Mario Martínez Cobos (diseño sonoro), Carlos García (sonido directo), Miguel Hernández Montero (mezcla de sonido) | *Los lobos*

Omar Juárez (diseño sonoro, mezcla de sonido), Milton Aceves (diseño sonoro), Alejandro Mayorquín (mezcla de sonido), Misael Hernández "Topillo" (sonido directo) | *Sin señas particulares*

Raúl Locatelli (sonido directo), Alejandro de Icaza (diseño sonoro), Jaime Baksht, Michelle Couttolenc (mezcla de sonido) | *Nuevo orden*

**Best Special Effects**

José Ángel Cordero Pérez, Mahonri Laurencio Cordero Ortiz, José Martínez "Josh" | *Sin señas particulares*  
José Martínez, Brenda Almontes Peña, Pablo Vinos | *Selva trágica* Ricardo Arvizu | *El baile de los 41*

**Ricardo Arvizu** | *Nuevo orden*

Yoshiro Hernández | *Yo Fausto*

**Best Visual Effects**

Alma Cebrián, John Castro | *El baile de los 41*

**Darío Basile, Curro Muñoz, Lara Gómez del Pulgar, Mario Lucero Recio, Carlos Claramunt Terol, Jaime Rafael Fuerte, Pablo Lamosa Barros, Ricardo G. Elipe, Antonio Ramos Ramos** | *Sin señas particulares*

Ernesto Peñaloza, Marco Rodríguez, Félix Bueno, Ma. Rosa Fusté | *Cuidado con lo que deseas*

Hughes Namur, Edgardo Mejía | *Nuevo orden*

Javier Velázquez Dorantes, Gustavo Bellon Rebolledo,

Benoit Mannequin | *Selva trágica*

**Best First Work**

*Las tres muertes de Marisela Escobedo* | Carlos Pérez Osorio

*Leona* | Isaac Cherem

*Ok, está bien...* | Gabriela Ivette Sandoval

*Sin señas particulares* | **Fernanda Valadez**

*Volverte a ver* | Carolina Corral Paredes

**Best New Performer (Revelación actuarial)**

Ana Laura Rodríguez | *Sin señas particulares*

**Indira Andrewin** | *Selva trágica*

Juan Jesús Varela | *Sin señas particulares*

Leonardo Nahim Nájzar Márquez | *Los lobos*

Maximiliano Nájzar Márquez | *Los lobos*

**Best Animated Short**

*A la cabeza* | Andrea Santiago

*El desfile de los ausentes* | Marcos Almada Rivero

***La casa de la memoria* | Sofía Rosales Arreola**

*Un juguete de madera soñó con barcos de papel* |

Mauricio Hernández Serrano

*Un peluche espacial* | Jesús Sebastián Jaime Oviedo

**Best Fictional Short**

*Arreglo napolitano* / Rodrigo Ruiz Patterson

***Asoleadas* | Nadia Ayala Tabachnik (tie)**

***Bisho* | Pablo Giles (tie)**

*El día comenzó ayer* | Julián Hernández

*Wheels* | Roberto Fiesco

**Best Documentary Short**

*Boca de culebra* | Adriana Otero Puerto

***Están en algún sitio* | Pablo Tamez Sierra**

*La felicidad en la que vivo* | Carlos Morales

*No será la vida de mi recuerdo* | Isabela Ripoll

*Tu'un Savi* | Uriel López España

**Best Animated Feature Film**

*Escuela de miedo* | Leopoldo Aguilar

*La liga de los 5* | Marvick Eduardo Núñez

*Un disfraz para Nicolás* | Eduardo Rivero

**Best Documentary Feature Film**

*Cosas que no hacemos* | Bruno Santamaría Razo

*La vocera* | Luciana Kaplan

***Las tres muertes de Marisela Escobedo* | Carlos Pérez Osorio**

*Volverte a ver* | Carolina Corral Paredes

*Yermo* | Everardo González

**Best Ibero-American Film**

*Babenco - Alguém tem que ouvir o coração de dizer:*

*Parou* (Brasil) | Bárbara Paz

***El agente topo* (Chile) | Maite Alberdi**

*El olvido que seremos* (Colombia) | Fernando Trueba

*La llorona* (Guatemala) | Jayro Bustamante

*Las niñas* (España) | Pilar Palomero

**Arieles de Oro (Lifetime Achievement Award)**

Ofelia Medina

Fernando Cámara



## OBITUARIES

### Lilia Aragón

Actress Lilia Aragón passed away on 2 August 2021; she was 82 years old. Lilia Aragón del Rivero was born in Cuatla, Morelos in September 1938. She began acting professionally in the late '60s in films such as *Recuerdos del porvenir* and *El Payo: Un hombre contra el mundo*. Aragón frequently appeared in *telenovelas* and on the stage. In the 2000s, she was Secretary General of actors' union ANDA and a federal representative.



### Pilar Bardem

Spanish actress Pilar Bardem died in Madrid on 17 July 2021; she was 82 years old. Bardem, the sister of director Juan Antonio Bardem and the mother of actor Javier Bardem, was born in Sevilla in 1939. She acted in more than 80 films, including Spanish-Mexican co-productions including *Nadie hablará de nosotras hasta que hayamos muerto* (for which she received a Best Supporting Actress Goya) and *Sin*





*noticias de Dios*. Bardem also worked regularly on television and in the theatre.



### Gustavo Carrillo



Voice actor Gustavo Carrillo passed away on 26 July 2021 at the age of 55; he had been suffering from COVID-19. Gustavo Huri Carrillo Saavedra, born in April 1966, worked in the Mexican dubbing industry for more than 30 years on numerous live-action and animated films and television series.



### Arturo Casanova

Voice actor Arturo Casanova passed away on 18 July 2021; he was 66 years old. Arturo Antonio Casanova Pérez was born in Mexico City in December 1954, and began his voice work in the 1980s; he was also a stage actor. Casanova's voice work including dubbing the voices of Charles Bronson, Leonard Nimoy, Marlon Brando and others, including 9 different characters in *Ghostbusters*.



### Felipe Cazals

Felipe Cazals, one of the most notable directors in the *cine nacional* of the past 50 years, died on 16 October 2021; he was 84 years old. Felipe Cazals Siena was born in July 1937 (sources differ whether he was born in France or Mexico). As a young man he attended the film school IDHEC in Paris, returning to Mexico in the mid-



'60s. Cazals directed some shorts and independent films before making his first "industry" feature, *Emiliano Zapata* (1970). His films included many classics of the "new Mexican cinema," such as *Canoa*, *Las Poquianchis*, and *El año de la peste*. In later years he would alternate making serious movies like *Los motivos de Luz* and *Bajo la metralla* with commercial works (*Rigo es amor*, *Burbujas de amor*). His final feature was *Ciudadano Buelna* (2013).

Cazals won the Best Director Ariel 3 times: *El año de la peste*, *Bajo la metralla*, *Las vueltas del citrillo*. His documentary *Digna: Hasta el último aliento* received the Best Feature Documentary prize. Cazals was nominated 9 additional times for Arieles, and received the career Ariel de Oro award in 2010.



### Tino Contreras

Jazz musician and composer Tino Contreras died at age 97 on 9 September 2021. Contreras was born in Chihuahua in 1924; he began playing the drums professionally at 8 years of age and later mastered the piano and trumpet, as well as composing music and singing. He worked with orchestras led by Paco Miller and Luis Arcaraz. He also led his own groups and recorded numerous albums.

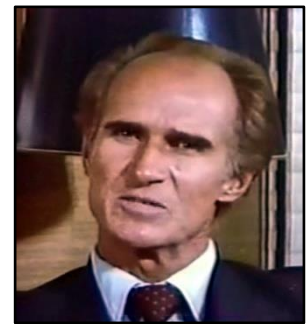


The music of Tino Contreras can be heard in a number of Mexican films, including *Guantes de oro*, *Pobre del pobre*, *Tintanson Crusoe*, and *Los Campeones justicieros*.



### Roger Cudney

Roger Cudney, the "professional *gringo*" of Mexican cinema from the 1970s to the 2020s, passed away on 5 July 2021 after an automobile accident in Mexico City. He was 85 years old. Roger Cudney was born in Ohio in June 1936 but moved to Mexico in the late 1960s and appeared in numerous films and television series, often in villainous roles, until his death. Cudney also worked in international productions shot in Mexico, such as *Total Recall*, *License to Kill*, and *Rambo: First Blood Part II*.



### Raúl de la Fuente

Voice actor Raúl de la Fuente died on 29 June 2021 at the age of 74. Raúl de la Fuente was born in Morelia in 1946 and began working in the dubbing industry in the Sixties. He had a long career dubbing features and television programs. Among the actors for whom he



provided Spanish dialogue were Charles Bronson, Christopher Lee as Dracula, Michael Caine, and Steve Martin. De la Fuente retired from performing due to ill-health in 2018 but continued to work for a production company and talent agency operated by his grandson.



## Gabriela del Valle

[This is a very belated obituary because I was unaware of Gabriela del Valle's passing until I was writing the review of *Sed de venganza* that appears in this issue.] Actress Gabriela del Valle died on 2 September 2017. Del Valle began working in films and *videohomes* in 1987, and later worked in television series like "Mujer, casos de la vida real" and various *telenovelas*. Her last appearances were in 2015.

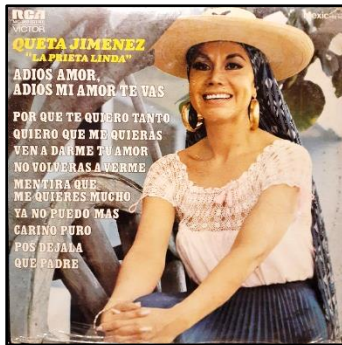


in 2015.



## Queta Jiménez

Singer and actress Queta Jiménez, known as "La Prieta linda," passed away on 21 September 2021 at the age of 88. Enriqueta Jiménez Chabolla, born in Guanajuato in July 1993, was the younger sister of Guillermina Jiménez Chabolla, better known as Flor Silvestre. The two Jiménez sisters performed together as children, and Queta followed her sister into the world of entertainment.



In addition to a long and successful career as a vocalist, Queta Jiménez appeared in more than a dozen films from the 1950s through the 1980s, including *Los alegres Aguilares* (with her brother-in-law, Antonio Aguilar), *Las pobres ilegales*, and *Es mi vida* (in which she plays herself, a friend and mentor of Juan Gabriel).



## Isabel Martínez

Actress Isabel Martínez "La Tarabilla" died of a heart attack on 7 August 2021; she was 75 years old. María Isabel Martínez Moreno began her career in the mid-70s as a comic actress and TV presenter, although she later worked in *telenovelas* in



presented, although she later worked in *telenovelas* in

serious roles. She also performed in live venues and appeared in a number of films, including the starring role in *La mujer policía*. She continued to work as recently as 2020.

The romantic relationship between Martínez and comic actor Pompín Iglesias lasted 3 decades, until his death in 2007.



## Diana Negrete & Elisa Christy

Diana Negrete, the daughter of Jorge Negrete and actress Elisa Christy, passed away in October 2021 (her death was announced 22 October) at the age of 79; she had been suffering from lung cancer. Negrete was born in 1942, the daughter of upcoming star Jorge Negrete and his then-wife Elisa Christy.



Christy, born Elisa Crochet Asperó, was the daughter of actors Julio Villareal and Elisa Asperó. She and Negrete wed in 1940, but divorced in 1942. Christy had appeared with Negrete in several films, and after their divorce she continued to act in small roles until the mid-1950s. She passed away at age 100 in 2018.

Diana Negrete had a good relationship with her father, and after his death spent much of her time preserving his image, including writing a 1987 biography of him. She had 5 children, who are all involved in the entertainment industry.



## Miguel Palmer

Actor Miguel Palmer died on 18 October 2021; he was 78 years old. Miguel Ángel Palomera Gonzali was born in the state of Tabasco in November 1942. Although interested in acting from a young age, his family compelled him to study medicine. After his father's death, Palmer was able to pursue an acting career. He worked in *telenovelas*, films and on the stage until 2014. In recent years Palmer's health was unstable. Palmer was married several times; his daughter by actress Mayté Carol is actress Valeria Palmer.





### Andrés Pardave



Actor Andrés Pardavé passed away on 7 September 2021. Pardavé originally studied to be an accountant, but left this for an acting career that lasted more than 40 years. He had roles in *Arráncame la vida*, as well as Hollywood films shot in Mexico such as *Man on Fire* and *Beverly Hills Chihuahua*, and numerous television series.



### Rosita Quintana

Rosita Quintana, one of the few remaining stars of the Golden Age of Mexican cinema, died on 23 August 2021; she was 96 years old. Trinidad Rosa Quintana Muñoz was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in July 1925. She began singing professionally at age 15, and moved to Mexico in 1947. She starred in numerous Mexican films until the early 1960s, when she returned to Argentina with her then-husband Sergio Kogan.



They later divorced (she would marry two more times) and Quintana came back to Mexico in the '70s, where she would make more films and television appearances as late as 2005. She received the lifetime achievement Ariel de Oro in 2016.



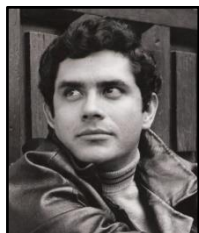
### Olga Rinzo

Actress Olga Rinzo passed away on 5 June 2021; she was 89 years old. Rinzo appeared in various films and on television beginning in the early 1970s. She had married actor Polo Ortín in 1954 and the marriage lasted until his death in 2016. Their son, Jorge Ortín, is also an actor.



### Javier Ruán

Actor Javier Ruán died of a heart attack on 11 October 2021. Javier Ruán Jaimes was born in Michoacán in January 1940 and began his professional acting career in the mid-1960s. He received an Ariel nomination as



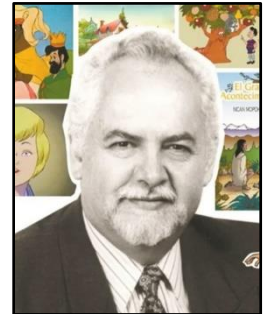
Best Co-Starring actor for his role in *Los marcados* (1970), but achieved his greatest fame in *telenovelas*, working more than 60 of these series. He also wrote the scripts for *telenovelas* including “Atrévete a olvidarme” and “Pueblo chico, infierno grande,” as well as several books.

Ruán received the Eduardo Arozamena medal for 50 years of uninterrupted professional acting. He is survived by two children.



### Fernando Ruiz

Fernando Ruiz Álvarez died on 21 August 2021 of a cardiac infection. Ruiz worked on the Walt Disney production of *The Sword in the Stone* and in the 1970s co-directed the first Mexican animated feature, *Los Tres Reyes Magos*. His next attempt at full-length animation was “La oruga Pepina,” which lost its government financing and was eventually made in Spain as *Katy la oruga*. Ruiz continued to work, making various shorts, television programs, and commercial films, but his later attempts to make a feature were never achieved.



### Johnny Ventura

Singer Johnny Ventura died on 28 July 2021 after suffering a stroke; he was 81 years old. Juan de Dios Ventura Soriano was born in the Dominican Republic in March 1940 and was a *merengue* singer known as “El Caballo Mayor.” Ventura also had a political career, serving as mayor of Santo Domingo for a time. He can be seen in the 1988 Mexican-Dominican film *Que viva el merengue y la lambada*.



### José Manuel Zamacona

José Manuel Zamacona, lead singer of “Los Yonics,” died of COVID-19 on 4 July 2021. Zamacona, born in 1952, was one of the founders of the group “Los Yonics” in 1975 in the state of Guerrero. In the 1980s they were very popular in Mexico and in the U.S. Southwest. Zamacona contracted



polio as a child and used crutches, but this did not prevent him from becoming a popular singer. Zamacona and Los Yonics starred in the film *Las baileras* (*Palabras tristes*) in 1990.



### Alfonso Zayas

Alfonso Zayas, one of the biggest stars of Mexican cinema of the 1980s, passed away on 8 July 2021; he was 80 years old. Juan Alfonso Zayas Inclán was born in Tulancingo, Hidalgo (also the birthplace of El Santo); he was related to the famous Inclán acting family (Miguel Inclán was his uncle, and Rafael Inclán was his cousin). Zayas was hired as a television “floor manager” at Televisión, where he became acquainted with actors like Mauricio Garcés and Xavier López “Chabelo,” eventually crossing over to performing himself. Zayas had small roles in the ‘60s and early ‘70s before making the leap to stardom in *sexy-comedies* of the 1980s.

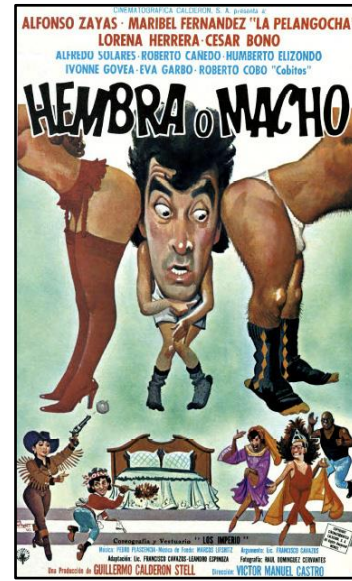
Alfonso Zayas was married 7 times and had 9 children.



### Alfonso Zayas Gallery



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