OBITUARIES

CARLOS MONSIVÁIS

Writer Carlos Monsiváis, one of the most influential observers of Mexican popular culture and politics over the last 50 years, died on 19 June 2010. He had suffered from pulmonary fibrosis for a number of years and had been hospitalised for the last several months with respiratory problems.

Carlos Monsiváis Aceves was born in Mexico City in May 1938, and attended UNAM. Beginning in the 1950s, he worked steadily for various Mexican newspapers and magazines as an editor, critic and essayist. He later wrote a number of books analysing Mexican culture (including cinema) and society, as well as biographies and critiques of cultural figures including vedette Celia Montalván, actor Pedro Infante, poet Amado Nervo, artist Frida Kahlo, and playwright Salvador Novo.

Monsiváis was especially fond of film, working as a film critic for various publications and on radio and television. He also made cameo appearances in a number of movies, including En este pueblo no hay ladrones, Los caifanes, Las visitaciones del Diablo, and Un mundo raro.

MARÍA TERESA RIVAS

Actress María Teresa Rivas died suddenly on 23 July 2010 in a Mexico City hospital; she was 92 years old (although some news reports listed the year of her birth as 1933, most other sources cite May 1918). María Teresa Orozco Moreno (her real name) was born in the state of Jalisco and began her professional acting career in the 1950s, after spending much of her early adult life as a wife and mother.

Although she appeared in films as early as Tierra de hombres (1956) and had also worked on the stage, Rivas gained widespread fame as the shrewish wife in the telenovela "Gutierritos" in 1958 (her role in the film version was taken by the more glamorous Elvira Quintana). Her most memorable roles over the years were on the small screen, often as assertive, dominating characters in programs such as "Los ricos también lloran," "El Maleficio," and others. She had been retired from acting since 2001, but had continued to write poetry and music.

María Teresa Rivas is not to be confused with Spanish actress María Rivas who emigrated to Mexico in the 1950s and appeared in a number of films (including Miércoles de ceniza, with María Teresa Rivas) and telenovelas.

María Teresa Rivas, whose husband Federico López Rivas died in 1995, is survived by 3 children, 9 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren.

ALDO SAMBRELL

Spanish actor Aldo Sambrell died on 10 July 2010 in a hospital in Alicante, Spain; he had suffered several strokes in May and had been hospitalised since then. Alfredo Sánchez Brell was born in Madrid in February 1931; he played professional soccer and sang before becoming an actor in the early 1960s. Some sources claim he appeared in several Mexican films in the 1950s, since he spent time in Mexico with his father during this period--his father was a political refugee from Franco's Spain and Sambrell left his homeland to avoid military service--but most cite the Spanish-made King of Kings as his first picture.

Sambrell (who was often billed as "Aldo Sanbrell") is best known for his many spaghetti Western roles, including parts in Sergio Leone's A Fistful of Dollars, For a Few Dollars More, and The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. In 1979-1980, Sambrell spent time in Colombia, appearing in numerous films including Monster, Kapax del Amazonas, El hombre del Gran Río, Las muñecas del King Kong, and Ahora mis pistolas hablan; the latter two films were Mexican-Colombia co-productions. Sambrell directed a number of films, including Ahora mis pistolas hablan.
Sambrell retired in 2006. He is survived by his wife, Cándida López (who acted under the name Candice Kay).

[Thanks to Tom Betts for informing me of the passing of Aldo Sambrell.]

Roberto Cantoral

Composer and singer Roberto Cantoral died of a heart attack on 7 August 2010; he was stricken on a flight to Mexico City from Brownsville, Texas (where he lived much of the time), and passed away in a Toluca hospital.

At the time of his death, Cantoral was president of the Sociedad de Autores y Compositores de México. Roberto Cantoral García was born in Tamaulipas in June 1935. He began singing and writing songs at a young age, and first achieved success in the early 1950s with his brother Antonio as "Los Hermanos Cantoral" (their most famous song was "El crucifijo de piedra"). After Antonio's death, Robert--along with Chamin Correa and Leonel Gálvez--formed "Los Tres Caballeros," but in 1960 Cantoral embarked on a solo career which continued until his death.

Cantoral's songs--mostly boleros and other romantic ballads--have been recorded by hundreds of other performers. Perhaps his most famous composition is "El reloj," followed by "La barca" and "El triste."

His songs can be heard in more than a dozen films, and Cantoral himself appeared on-screen in at least ten films in the late 1950s as one of "Los Tres Caballeros." He was married to Itatí Zucci; actress Itatí Cantoral is their daughter.

The Mexican Filmography 1916-2001: now in paperback!

The Mexican Filmography 1916-2001 (McFarland, 2004), my comprehensive (though not perfect) guide to Mexican cinema, has been reprinted in a handy, less expensive, 2-volume paperback edition. This is identical to the original in content (unfortunately, I could neither update it nor correct the handful of errors and omissions). Although the original was extremely expensive, now, at less than half the price of the hardback edition, everyone can afford to buy it!

Visita al pasado [Visit to the Past] (CONACITE DOS, 1979) Dir: René Cardona Sr.; Scr: Jorge Alberto Lozoya, Estela Matute; Photo: Raúl Domínguez; Music: Marcos Lifshitz; Prod Mgr: Guillermo Escobar; Asst Dir: Félix Martín; Film Ed: Raúl Casso; Art Dir: José Méndez; Camera Op: Roberto Rivera; Makeup: Victoria Celis; Sound Rec: Ricardo Saldivar; Union: STIC

Cast: Gonzalo Vega (Pablo), Mónica Prado (Alicia), Carlos Cardán (Rodrigo), María Rebeca Zepeda (Rebeca), Rodolfo Chávez Martínez (Gerardo), Tania Elisa Briceño (Tere), Juan Carlos Briceño (Memo), Antu Terrazas (Alberto), Susana Cabrera (Carlota), María Teresa Rivas (doña Josefa, La Corregidora), Ernesto Gómez Cruz (Benito Juárez), Paco Sañudo (Epigemenio), Salvador Julián (Doroteo Arango?), Joaquín García "Chorole" and Gerardo Zepeda "Chiquilín" (henchmen), Alfonso Munguía (captain), Carlos Bravo y Fernández (guru y Padre Superior), Miguel Ángel Rodríguez (Moctezuma), Gloria Chávez (servant), Rubí Re (teacher's aide), Maritza Aldaba Corral (teacher), Luciano Hernández de la Vega (El Corregidor), Alfonso Kaffitti, Sergio Orrante, Juan Barrón, Fausto Fierro, Edmundo Arizpe, Ernesto Burgueño

Notes: most Mexican films of the 1970s (certainly the overwhelming majority in the latter half of the decade) were shot on location (some interiors were still shot in the studio, on rather anodyne sets for the most part). This is especially noticeable on productions affiliated with the STIC union, but even STPC movies display the same pattern. As a result, many films produced during this period have a distinctive look, and--to be honest--not a good one. Whether it's lighting, film stock, processing, or simply the visual limitations of location filming, there are too many "dull" Mexican movies, visually and otherwise, from this period.

Visita al pasado fits the pattern, on all counts. The script is inconsistent, uninteresting, at times incoherent. The performances are stilted. The direction and other technical aspects are functional, nothing more. The locations are interesting--the movie was shot at a colonial-era convent in the Desierto de los Leones park in the Distrito Federal--but are never really convincing as narratively "real."

A busload of school children travels to the Desierto de los Leones on a field trip. 5 of the young students--Rebeca, Gerardo, Tere, Memo, and Alberto--wander off and discover the old convent, meeting the current owner, eccentric Carlota. Carlota invites them to stay for lunch and introduces them to her niece Alicia; the family is trying to renovate the old building with money earned from operating an old mine on the premises. Pablo, Alicia's boyfriend, runs the mine, but sinister Rodrigo and his two bumbling henchmen are trying to gain control by...
means of Rodrigo's would-be romance with the rotund Carlota.

The schoolchildren become overnight guests at the convent (Why? Who knows?). Learning of a legend that the catacombs contain a portal to the past, they go exploring that night. Wouldn't you know it, each time one or more of the students emerges into the past, they immediately meet someone famous--Aztec emperor Moctezuma (who speaks only Nahuatl), Pancho Villa (actually, Doroteo Arango, before he became Pancho Villa), Benito Juárez, and even "La Corregidora," doña Josefina Ortiz de Domínguez, one of the supporters of Mexico's bid for independence in 1810. Finally, all five of the children find themselves (in period costume) in the colonial era, where the intrigue between Carlota, Rodrigo, Pablo, and Alicia is being played out in a similar fashion to its 20th-century incarnation. Eventually, the children find their way out of the labyrinthian catacombs and back to 1979, where they are greeted by their frantic teacher and the police. Carlota and her family don't exist, the convent is a national landmark, not a private residence. The children troop off, realising no one will ever believe their adventure...although a Polaroid photograph left behind bears evidence of their...visit to the past!

There's really not much to like about Visita al pasado. The comedy is clumsy, the pacing is slow (more than half the film takes place in 1979, before the time portal is located), the plot is thin and illogical, there's no suspense and no particular characterisation of the performers aside from the broadest stereotypes and gestures.

About the only interest for me, aside from the comic-book level historical caricatures of Juárez, Villa, Moctezuma, etc., was spotting familiar faces such as María Rebeca, Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, and Rubí Re.

Otherwise, Visita al pasado is a fairly boring children's fantasy, a far cry from superior products in the same genre such as the Caperucita films of the 1960s, or even Chabelo y Pepito vs. los monstruos.

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partly for legal reasons (i.e., Delgado gets credited on the Colombian version because it's a co-production and needed a local director?).

Regardless of the story behind this movie's production, in its current form it is horribly confusing, mixing flashbacks and "contemporary" footage with narration by Emilio Fernández's character (dubbed by someone else, possibly Victor Alcocer). Even the flashbacks are confusing and aren't in strict chronological order. The synopsis below does not follow the events as they unfold in the movie, for clarity's sake.

The elderly don Emilio visits a cemetery and tells some children the story of Camilo Reyes...Reyes loved Rosalía Martín and they were wed, but Rosalía was also coveted by don Tomás, the brutal cacique of the region.

To save Camilo's life, Rosalía leaves him and becomes the lover of Tomás (it's possible Camilo thought she was dead--Tomás's men burned his home and perhaps Camilo believed his wife died in the fire, this isn't clear). For some reason, Camilo participates in the robbery of a shipment of gold coins engineered by Tomás and his men; the wagon driver is killed in the assault. Camilo refuses to accept a share of the loot, but Tomás orders him to take charge of the gold and hide it (why? Camilo can't speak, actually, since he has no tongue). Tomás sends a note, offering to return Rosalía to Camilo in exchange for half of the gold, but this is a trap: Camilo has to shoot his way out of an ambush at Tomás's house. Finally, Tomás lures Camilo to an isolated spot in the countryside, but has his (remaining) men hidden nearby. There is a gun battle--the odds are tipped in Camilo's favor by the arrival of the widow. Tomás and his men are killed, but Rosalía is also mortally wounded. Camilo rides away, alone.

In addition to the confusing narrative structure and the holes in the plot (or perhaps I just wasn't paying attention), Ahora mis pistolas hablan is rather shoddily made. The photography is weak (possibly the video transfer makes it look worse than it really is--this is now out on DVD but I am basing my review on a old VHS), the Colombian locations and supporting players never resemble Mexico or Mexicans in the least (on the other hand, Felipe Arriaga nor Beatriz Adriana are clearly not Colombian, so the movie is seemingly situated in a sort of national limbo). Beatriz Adriana gets to sing (lip-sync) a couple of nice songs and Arriaga also has several musical numbers, and while both of these players are satisfactory--and Aldo Sanbrell is a solid pro--the rest of the cast is nondescript (leaving Emilio Fernández out of it, since he doesn't interact with the Colombian-shot scenes). There are a few decent dramatic moments but for the most part this is a muddled and rather boring piece.

Kidnap Komedy

Me permites matarte? [May I Kill You?] (Televiscine--Cooperativa Ollinyoitl, © 1992) Exec Prod: J. Celia Hajjar Ch.; Dir: Víctor Ugalde; Scr: Pablo Struck, Víctor Ugalde; Story: Pablo Struck; Photo: César Taboada; Music: Ignacio Pulido; Asst Dir: Socorro Méndez; Film Ed: Manuel Rodriguez, Oscar Figueroa; Camera Op: Rafael Ortega; Sound Engin: Miguel Sandoval; Makeup: Carmen de la T.; Union: STIC

Cast: Pedro Romo (Calavera), Paco Ibáñez (Drácula), Pablo Ferrel (Gorila), Lina Santos (Martha Cue), Jorge Muñiz (Rafael Cue), Rosita Arenas (Martha's mother), Alberto Pedret (Martha's father), Diana Herrera (Doña Toña), Valentina Tinel (Lola), Justo Martinez (Don Torimo), Lorena Victoria (maid), Maria Antonia Y. (Ofelia), Paco Mauri (Sgt.)

Notes: This is a mildly entertaining film, harmed by a couple of scenes in questionable taste and by some clumsy attempts at slapstick. "Pedro, Paco, and Pablo," Televiscine's in-house comedy group (best-known for the Risa en vacaciones series but present in many other movies as well), tries a Three Stooges skit here and generally fails, although their characters (well, two of them) are likeable and the performers are seasoned pros.

Confused by two identical cars, a pair of kidnappers (wearing a skull mask and a vampire mask, leading to their characters being referred to as Calavera and Drácula for the rest of the movie) abduct the wrong man--they take Rafael Cue instead of a wealthy financier. Returning to their hideout, Calavera and Drácula are berated by the mastermind of the scheme, Gorila. He tells them Rafael will have to be murdered so he can't identify them; they can kidnap the real victim the following week.
The kidnappers try to find a way to execute Rafael neatly and painlessly (reading a book on "Capital Punishment in the United States" for tips). A home-made electric chair fails when the fuse blows. Rafael urges them to ransom him: he says his wife Martha's family is wealthy, and suggests that he get part of the ransom as his "commission." However, when he calls Martha, she thinks he is making up the story of the abduction. The kidnappers call back later, and this time Martha believes them, but through a misunderstanding they think she wants them to kill her husband. Eventually, the confusion is straightened out and Rafael becomes the kidnappers' silent partner in an auto repair shop financed with the ransom money.

Me permite matarte? is fairly well put together and the performances are satisfactory (it's nice to see Rosita Arenas again, in a minor role as Martha's mother), but there are a few aspects which make the picture less successful than it could have been. As noted above, the slapstick comedy is generally not successful, seeming forced, slow-paced, and shot in a clumsy fashion (for example, in one scene Rafael tries to escape over a wall; as he straddles the wall, a dog on the other side seizes his necktie and yanks on it, while Gorila pulls on his legs from behind. This is shot so ineptly that a potentially good gag is wasted). The scene in which Rafael is nearly electrocuted is also marred by some lapses in taste (he urinates in fear and again in pain as the current is turned on), although some viewers may not feel this is out of bounds (can you say There's Something About Mary and Dumb and Dumber?).

Another irritating facet is the kidnappers' apparent willingness to murder Rafael in cold blood--Gorila is especially ruthless in this regard, while Calavera and Drácula are somewhat more sympathetic characters, yet even they make several attempts to kill their captive (until the end, when Drácula fakes a heart attack and offers to let Rafael escape). It is difficult to empathize with "funny" criminals if they are trying to murder someone (and are only stopped by their own squeamishness and incompetence, not their innate decency).

This said, there are some nice bits and even a few funny lines in the picture. One that isn't especially humorous but is interesting nonetheless occurs when Rafael first calls Martha. She asks why he didn't come home the night before and he claims he did, he just got up early to go to work. Martha: "The day you get up early and go to work [is the day] PRI will lose [an election]!" Rafael: "Well, they lost in Chihuahua!" This refers to the PRI political party which for many years never lost an election (in part due to massive fraud); one of the first "big" elections they actually lost was for the governorship of the state of Chihuahua.

Me permite matarte? is mildly entertaining, albeit sporadically.

Un mundo raro [An Odd World] (UNAM-CONACULTA-DIFUSIÓN CULTURAL UNAM-CUEC-FFCC-IMCINE/Quality Films, 2001) Exec Prod: Walter Navas; Prod: Mitl Valdáez; Dir: Armando Casas; Ser: Armando Casas, Rafael Tonatiuh; Photo: Alejandro Cantú; Music: José Navarro; Prod Mgr: Raymundo Díaz-González; Asst Dir: Israel Pasco; Film Ed: Manuel Rodriguez, Mario Sandoval; Art Dir: Lorenza Manrique

Cast: Víctor Hugo Arana (Emilio Martinez), Emilio Guerrero (Salvador, "Tolín"), Ana Serradilla (Dianita Palacios), Jorge Sepúlveda (Pancho), Anílú Pardo (Norma Monroy), Juan Carlos Vives (Tito), Jorge Zárate (Cayubas), Tomihuatzi Xelhuantzi (Oso), Raúl Adalid (Pollo), Manuel Sevilla (Canito), Amara Villafuerte (Pilar), Hugo Albores (cabbie), Ernesto Godoy (yuppie), Antonio Monroy (family friend), Gastón Melo (producer), Mónica Huarte (makeup girl), Jesús Arriaga (floor mgr), Rhuál Rogers (Campillo), Adriana Laffán (wardrobe mistress), Teresa Lagunes (Carmelita), Rafael Tonatiuh (writer), Carlos Monsiváis (himself)

Notes: Mexican films about kidnapping and abduction practically constitute a sub-genre in themselves, especially over the last 20 years. One big reason, of course, is the rash of real-life crimes of this sort: some of the victims were quite well known or were relatives of famous people, including Ernestina Sodi and Laura Zapata (sisters of singer-actress Thalía), tv host Adal Ramones, Vicente...
Fernández hijo (whose kidnappers cut off his finger to pressure his famous father), actress Elizabeth Aguilar, etc. In addition to the "traditional" kidnapping-for-ransom (whose victims are normally from wealthy families), the so-called secuestro exprés also gained popularity among Mexican criminals, who abducted ordinary citizens and forced them to withdraw money from automated teller machines before releasing them.

Curiously, some Mexican "kidnap" movies are comedies. In addition to Me permites matarte? and Un mundo raro, reviewed in this issue, films such as En el país de no pasa nada look on the "lighter side" of abduction. Un mundo raro only puts its plot in motion with a secuestro exprés, and otherwise is a humorous treatise on Mexican television and the stars it creates. The film also bears some slight traces of the Paco Stanley case, in which the genial television host (who at one point in his career even sported a moustache and goatee similar to Tolin's in Un mundo raro) was shot to death in broad daylight outside a Mexico City restaurant. The film's producers denied any such inspiration and indeed, the plot of the movie bears no particular resemblance to specific real-life events (the basic premise may also marginally remind one of Scorsese's 1992 The King of Comedy but again, there is no great correlation between the two films).

Emilio and his brother Pancho are members of a gang who--with the aid of a dishonest cabbie--abduct taxi passengers, rob them, and force them to withdraw money from ATMs. One day, their victim is Salvador, a television star known as "Tolin." Emilio, who dreams of being a stand-up comedian himself (though his repertoire apparently consists of only two jokes), frees Tolin while his accomplices are out. Emilio later mails the TV host's valuables back to him with a note requesting an audition, and Tolin agrees. However, when he catches Dianita ("la de las vuelticas"--she who spins around), his foil on the show, laughing and chatting with Emilio, Tolin jealously orders his former kidnaper ejected by security.

In an amusing scene set in a restaurant men's room (where Tolin is snorting cocaine), Emilio begs for another chance but it is his brother Pancho's intervention--with a loaded .45--that convinces Tolin to put Emilio on the show. Though Emilio is pleased with his role--completely invisible, inside a giant tooth costume that "Dr. Tolin" bludgeons with a prop candy cane--Pancho is disappointed (as are the rest of Emilio's family and friends, who have eagerly assembled to view the program). Tolin finds himself abducted once again, and Pancho informs him Emilio must have a regular part on "El Show de Tolin" if the program's host is to lead a peaceful and healthy life.

Tolin complies with ill grace (he attempts to hire a crooked cop to "remove" Emilio permanently, but this plan fails). He allows Emilio to do a stand-up comedy routine, but repeatedly interrupts and abuses the young man; the second time this occurs, Emilio snaps and brutally beats another actor, then holds the rest of the cast and crew at gunpoint until Tolin convinces him to surrender the weapon (the audience thinks it's part of the show). Emilio finally gets his chance to do his act un molested, but remains silent and unmoving. Later, he rescues Tolin from yet another robbery-abortion (this time by strangers) and as the film concludes, has become part of the comedian's security entourage.

One of the nice things about Un mundo raro is the multi-dimensionality of the characters. Emilio is a bit of a puzzle, seemingly intelligent (he deliberately misspells a word in his letter to Tolin, to make himself seem more humble), involved in a criminal gang, unrealistically dreaming of a stand-up comedy career (yet apparently doing nothing to follow this "dream"). His relationship with Diana is also refreshing: he has a crush on her but she sees him only as a friend. Stood up by her date one night, she goes out with Emilio, gets drunk, and passes out (and later thanks him for being a gentleman and not taking advantage of her). Diana has ambitions and is embarrassed by her role as "la de las vuelticas" (wearing skimpy costumes, she's forced to slowly turn around on stage to showcase her figure), but is generally a sweet, ingenuous person. Emilio's brother Pancho is fond of his younger brother and doesn't hesitate to use threats of violence to help Emilio's "career." The scene where Emilio's family and friends watch "El Show de Tolin," growing ever more impatient at his non-appearance, is amusing and yet slightly sad (it's a low-key version of "The Simpsons" episode where Homer becomes the voice of "Poochie"): Pancho is irritated and humiliated by his brother's invisibility. Even Tolin--a rude, domineering, drug-using, sexually-harassing, penurious, bully--is recognisably human and has his sympathetic moments.

The performances are effective (Jorge Sepúlveda won an Ariel as Best Supporting Actor for his role) and the
ambiance of Mexican television--one segment of it, at least (we also catch a glimpse of a typical *telenovela* on a monitor)--is spot on. The production values are fine, but given this is a contemporary comedy filmed on location, that's not particularly surprising. *Un mundo raro* was the first feature for director Armando Casas, who has worked in various capacities during his career, including a term as director of the film school CUEC, making shorts, producing, and writing.

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**ART CINEMA**

*Él (Him)* *(Ultramar Films, 1952)* **Prod:** Oscar Dancigers; **Dir:** Luis Buñuel; **Adapt:** Luis Buñuel, Luis Alcoriza; **Orig. Novel:** Mercedes Pinto; **Photo:** Gabriel Figueroa; **Music:** Luis Hernández Breton; **Prod Mgr:** Federico Amérgio; **Prod Chief:** Fidel Pizarro; **Admin:** Antonio de Salazar; **Asst Dir:** Ignacio Villareal; **Film Ed:** Carlos Savage; **Art Dir:** Edward Fitzgerald; **Decor:** Pablo Galván; **Makeup:** Armando Meyer; **Dialog Rec:** José de Pérez; **Sound Dir:** Jesús González G.

*[this film was released in the USA with sub-titles as *This Strange Passion* (Omnifilms)].

**Cast:** Arturo de Córdova *(Francisco Galván de Montemayor), Delia García *(Gloria), Luis Beristáin *(Raúl Conde), Aurora Walker *(Esperanza Peralta), Carlos Martínez Baena *(Padre Velasco), Manuel Dondé *(Pablo), Rafael Banquells *(Ricardo Luján), Fernando Casanova *(Beltrán), Roberto Meyer *(first lawyer), José Pidal *(Padre Superior), Antonio Bravo *(guest), León Barroso *(waiter), Chel López *(dam worker), José Muñoz *(man in hotel), Manuel Casanueva, Alvaro Matute, Carmen Dorronsoro de Roces *(pianist)*

**Notes:** this is one of Luis Buñuel's best Mexican movies, along with *Ensayo de un crimen, La ilusión viaja de tranvía*, and some others. Though it's yet another Arturo de Córdova film in which he plays a neurotic or psychologically disturbed character *(cf *Crepúsculo, El hombre sin rostro*, etc.), Buñuel adds a number of directorial touches which raise *Él* above the norm.

The devout Francisco spots Gloria in church, and finally arranges to meet her. She acknowledges a mutual attraction, but nervously leaves. Following her to a cafe, Francisco sees Gloria embrace a man--coincidentally, this is Raúl, an acquaintance of his. Francisco invites Raúl to a party, and encourages him to bring his fiancee *(Gloria)*, without revealing he has already met her. One thing leads to another, and Francisco steals Gloria from his friend. The bitter Raúl departs to work on a construction project in the north. Later, on his return to the capital, he accidentally encounters Gloria and she tells him the story of her marriage to Francisco...

On their honeymoon in Guanajuato--where Francisco is involved in a long-running legal dispute over some property--Gloria runs into a casual acquaintance, Ricardo. Francisco, who earlier had queried Gloria about her relationship with Raúl, becomes convinced Ricardo is stalking Gloria. His irrational jealousy increases steadily, and he even strikes his wife (there is a horrifying scene in which Francisco's major-domo awakes to hear Gloria screaming--exactly why, we aren't shown, but apparently Francisco is "punishing" her). Gloria complains to her mother (and shows her a bruise) and to Padre Velasco, but they urge her to accommodate Francisco, and downplay her fears *(Francisco spoke to Gloria's mother first, and apparently convinced her Gloria was exaggerating).* Francisco spots Gloria with Raúl, and his jealousy reaches a fever pitch. He "shoots" her: even though the pistol held only blanks, Gloria suffers a nervous collapse. One night, Francisco takes a needle, thread, and other implements to Gloria's bedroom, prepared to render her incapable of sexual relations. Her screams alert the servants, and Francisco leaves. The next day, he discovers Gloria is gone. Francisco "follows" Gloria and Raúl to church, but discovers he has mistaken another couple for his absent wife. While in church, Francisco hallucinates and thinks everyone--including Padre Velasco--is laughing at his situation. When he tries to strangle the priest, Francisco has to be physically restrained.

Several years later, Raúl, his wife Gloria, and their son Francisco (probably Francisco's child) visit a monastery in Colombia. Francisco is living there, and while they don't speak to him, the Padre Superior says he is now at peace. However, after they leave, Francisco admits he saw his former wife and his best friend. His attitude indicates he may not be as emotionally peaceful as the others believe.

*Él* doesn't fully explain Francisco's mania via pop psychology, but it is clear he's obsessive and devious from the start. He fires one lawyer for failing to successfully resolve his lawsuit, insisting that the man has "sold out" to the other side; although he tells Gloria his new lawyer has promised a speedy conclusion, the attorney himself confesses he said no such thing. When a maid complains...
to Francisco about his major-domo Pablo's sexual harassment, Francisco berates Pablo but orders him to fire the maid, since Pablo is a man and the more valuable employee, while the maid represents "sin" and sexual temptation.

As noted above, Buñuel's directorial touches are quite prominent and entertaining. In the opening sequence, Padre Velasco (as part of the pre-Easter celebration) washes the feet of various acolytes, assisted by Francisco and other devout churchmen. However, Francisco's gaze wanders from the bare feet of the boys to the feet of women in the congregation, finally settling on Gloria's. Later, in the hotel sequence, Francisco thinks he sees Ricardo peeping through a keyhole at Gloria; he takes a long pin and jams it into the aperture (fortunately, the eyeball was only his fantasy, and nobody gets poked). Francisco's hallucinations in the church are amusing, signifying his unbalanced mental state. Overall, a very accomplished and interesting film.

A fuego lento* [Slowly] (CONACITE DOS, 1977)

_DIR-Scr: Juan Ibáñez; Photo: Javier Cruz; Music: Damaso Pérez Prado; Guitar: Chamin Correa; Co-Dir: Damián Acosta; Film Ed: Ángel Camacho; Art Dir-Décor: Oscar Rodríguez, Enrique Zavala, Francisco Icaza; Makeup: Tony Ramirez; Sound Op: Guillermo Carrasco; Camera Op: Alberto Arellanos, Adrián Canales; Music Rec & Rec: Ricardo Saldivar; Sound Ed: Rogelio Zúñiga; Union: STIC

*a secondary (or re-release) title of México nocturno

cited in some sources.

_Cast: [please note: due to the large number of performers in this movie and the almost complete lack of character names, I have refrained from trying to specifically identify every performer with descriptors such as "third man from left in billiards scene"]]_ 

Maria Victoria (singer at party), Oscar Chávez (Oscar**), Gilberto Pérez Gallardo (Luis), Maria Luisa Landín (singer in Blanquita), Maria Safont (Guadalupe Palma), Adalberto Martínez "Resortes" (dancer), Damaso Pérez Prado (himself), Valeria Pani (?Luz), Karla, Xóchitl, Fedor Islava, Josefina Echáñove (female gang leader), Magda Vicaino, Luis Couturier, Martha Zavaleta (?Concha), Javier Estrada (El Enano), Tina French, Javier Tenorio, José Najera (gang leader), René Barrera (chief henchman), Xorge Noble (taxi driver), Marcelo Villamil, Wanda Seux, Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, Polo Salazar, Erika Carlsson, Yogy Ruge, Guillermo Ayala, Lilián Gay, Luz Maria Peña, Octavio "Famoso Gómez," Chad Hasting, Alonso Echáñove, Leonardo Méndez, Martina Mena, Odilia Flores, Gabriela Araujo, María Clara Zurita, Sergio Acosta, The Dolly Sisters, Guillermo Acosta, Juan Vázquez, Enrique Ontiveros, Ricardo Luna, Jaime Ramos, Ángel de la Peña, Fernando Negrete, Julián Abitia (artist), Morris Gray, Roberto Brondo, Sammy Ortiz, Elianne Campillo, Leticia Robles, Alberto Arbizu, Nerinda Ferrer, Bernabe Palma, N. León "Frankenstein," Leonardo Trebole, Janette Mass (Janette), Salvador Pineda, René Rene, El Moro, Federico Bermejo, ?-erry Halliday, Princesa Yamal, Jim Habiff, Eugenia Dolores, Christa Walter, Alfonso Kaffit, Fulvio Sotomayer

**the IMDB credits Chávez as "Juan" and this is clearly incorrect. The name credits for Valeria Pani and Martha Zavaleta, also taken from IMDB, are given a "?" accordingly (I could not figure out any names for them!).

_Notes: this is an extremely unusual movie, described by some as "Fellini-like." There is no dialogue for the first 24 minutes, and relatively little after that (one wonders if Ibáñez was thinking about making a movie with no dialogue and just chickened out). There are quite a few sequences scored to mambos by Pérez Prado, which are amusing for a while but get rather tedious after the third or fourth time. The plot is very negligible and at the same time inscrutable (deliberately so).

Guadalupe Palma is a dancer at the Teatro Blanquita, and works part-time as a prostitute. She's hired by mid-level gangster Luis to attend a party and sleep with one of the guests; afterwards, Guadalupe takes something from the man's jacket and vanishes. Apparently, Guadalupe has papers of great importance to the drug cartels, and various factions tear the city apart searching for her. Guadalupe's boyfriend is impoverished guitarist and singer Oscar. The couple is reunited at the movie's end but before they can escape, Guadalupe is shot to death by the drug traffickers. Oscar is dumped in a vacant lot.
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That's not a lot of plot for around 100 minutes of film, is it? The first 24 minutes takes the audience only through Guadalupe's theft of the documents and her disappearance (the first spoken words are "Where is Guadalupe!?"), so there are 70+ minutes devoted to the gangland search for her with occasional digressions, mostly Oscar moping around or singing depressing songs.

It's hard to tell, but there are apparently three drug gangs chasing Guadalupe—one run by El Enano, one by a woman, and one by another man. Each gang has its own "soldiers" and a crowd of hangers-on (especially women), who troop around in amusing fashion, like a gaggle of geese. There are several shots of newspaper headlines referring to corruption and drug smuggling, and a news broadcast on the topic is also heard, but (perhaps deliberately), the gangsters are more or less indistinguishable from businessmen, politicians, their bodyguards, and their wives, mistresses, etc.

The "other" side of Mexico is represented by Óscar, a friendly cab driver, and the strange denizens of a cantina (many of whom are blind or partially blind). The movie's final scene shows a distraught Óscar stumbling through a passageway towards his apartment and agitating the blind people who (for some reason) line the hall. They begin blindly striking out at each other… probably signifying something profound.

*Una fuego lento* is for the most part extremely well-made, with excellent locations and set design, fine photography (extremely fluid, with lots of tracking shots) and Pérez Prado's fun mambo ("La niña popoff" is a bit over-used, however). But there are some problems. The musical numbers onstage at the Teatro Blanquita are poorly staged and shot, especially the opening sequence which tries to tell a "story" (white-zootsuited dancer Resortes gets in an argument with a black-clad villain over a young woman, a fight breaks out, she is killed in the crossfire, Resortes carries her off sadly at the end—this roughly foreshadows the movie's conclusion, since Guadalupe is the dancer "shot" in the opening musical number). There are too many people on the stage and, despite frequent high-angle shots, Ibañez never captures the essential kinetic action.

Other sequences are better-directed and even witty. Several of the gangsters are pursuing Guadalupe through a crowded market in the city; they try to bully their way past some campesinos, who quickly pull their pistols! The "Mexican stand-off" (in the truest sense of the word) is defused, but Guadalupe escapes.

The film also gets rather violent in the latter stages. Various people are savagely beaten on screen in an attempt to get them to inform on Guadalupe, and a husky dog owned by two imported gringo hitmen is killed (off-screen, but its corpse is shown hanging in an apartment).

One interesting aspect of this movie is its very large cast, which include some performers rather closely associated with Gustavo Alatriste (particularly Gilberto Pérez Gallardo), and many players who would become well-known in a few years (Miguel Ángel Rodríguez, Salvador Pineda, Abril (aka Elianne) Campillo, Alfonso Écharnove, and sexy-comedy stalwarts Wanda Seux and Janette Mass). Why María Victoria is top-billed is a complete mystery—she sings one song and is gone, poof! Similarly, Maria Luisa Landín is on hand for one song and Resortes has two dance numbers, but none of these people have any dialogue at all.

Óscar Chávez is satisfactory but has little to do besides wander around in a kind of daze and sing a couple of songs. María Safont—about whom I know nothing—is attractive except... she has NO eyebrows! I don't know if this was a deliberate attempt to make her look odd or what, but it is certainly off-putting. Gilberto Pérez Gallardo stands out among the other players: his character is a sort of middle-man who is constantly accompanied by his "wife" (ultimately revealed to be a man in drag, which is what I suspected all along) as he attempts to straighten out the mess he (indirectly) made (by hiring Guadalupe). Finally, unable to bear the strain, he commits suicide.

*A fuego lento* is interesting and not dull, but it is also weird and somewhat pretentious. Of course, that can also be said about *Last Year at Marienbad*, and *A fuego lento* is a lot more fun to watch.

SEVENTIES CINE

Ratas de asfalto [Asphalt Rats] (CONACITE DOS, 1977) Director: Rafael Villaseñor Kuri; Adapt: Ramón Obón, Fernando Galiana; Story: Emmanuel Olea F., Francisco Guerrero R., Rafael Villaseñor K.; Photo: Javier Cruz; Music Dir: Rafael Gonzales; Songs: Somos Hermanos; Asst Dir: Francisco Guerrero; Film Ed: Maximino Sánchez; Art Dir: Francisco Hernández; Camera Op: Alberto Arellano; Automobile Stunts: Ronald Ross, Speed Steam[s]; Makeup: Antonio Ramirez; Sound: Guillermo Carrasco; Union: STIC
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Cast: Ana Martín (Irene Mendoza), Armando Silvestre (Eric’s father), Arsenio Campos (Eric), Emmanuel Olea (Horacío), Carlos Derbez (Sammy), Eduardo Noriega (Marcos Ruiz), Guillermo Lagunez [sic] (Memo), Tere Velázquez (Fabiola), Raúl Meraz (Samuel Domínguez), Oscar Traven (Traven, Memo’s friend), Fernando Pinkus (cop), Jorge Reynoso (Tiburón), Carmelina Encinas (girl at party), Eduardo Lois, Armando Pacheco, Silverio Pérez Salas, Roberto Brondo, Carlos Bravo Segundo, Oscar Flores, Gustavo del Castillo, Ibet Reyna, Rafael Arrillaga, Rachel Maciel, Daniel Alfaro, Ingrid Bruner, Elianne [later Abril] Campillo

Notes: Mil caminos tiene la muerte (1976) and Ratas de asfalto (1977) were made about a year apart but share the same director, writers, and major performers (Martín, Olea, Campos, Derbez). Both are grim, nihilistic movies about young people but Ratas de asfalto is the milder of the two films, substituting young men from good families who participate in illegal street races for the first picture’s outlaw biker gang, and throwing in a heavy dose of melodramatic sub-plots.

Eric, Horacio, and Sammy are three friends who own fast cars and race them on the street, often against Memo and his “club.” Horacio is having an affair with Fabiola, Sammy’s mother, but Sammy doesn’t know this. On a trip to Cuernavaca, Eric meets Irene, the ex-mistress of a wealthy middle-aged man. They fall in love, but when Eric reveals the relationship to his father, the older man discourages him. Eric’s father is actually another of Irene’s ex-lovers, and when he offers her money to leave his son alone, she refuses—she will only drop Eric if his father takes her back as his mistress.

Sammy races against Memo and loses, then demands a rematch, wagering his car against Memo’s. When he sees he’s losing, Sammy recklessly rams Memo; both cars go out of control and crash. Memo’s auto smashes into two cars full of spectators and all go up in flames. Sammy is rescued but he and Eric are arrested. Sammy’s influential father arranges to have his son and friends cleared of complicity in the fatal accident.

Eric discovers his father and Irene are lovers. Speeding away in anger, Eric wrecks his car and is killed. Horacio, leaving a tryst with Fabiola, is shot in the back by an unseen assailant and will be confined to a wheelchair for life. Sammy visits his friend in the hospital and admits he was the shooter, because Horacio was sleeping with Fabiola. However, Sammy is caught by Memo’s gang and lynched, his body left dangling from a sign over the highway.

As mentioned earlier, Ratas de asfalto is harmed by the melodramatic interpolations, specifically Horacio’s affair with Fabiola and the Eric-his father-Irene triangle. The first sub-plot is somewhat believable, since one can conceive of Horacio meeting Fabiola through his friendship with Sammy; she has an apartment where she conducts her love affairs and Horacio is not the first young man she’s been with. However, it is a typical far-fetched movie coincidence that Irene—who met Eric by accident as they were both driving to Cuernavaca—just happens to later run into Eric and fall in love with him, and she just happens to be the former mistress of Eric’s father! What are the odds? (Astronomical, that’s what) The movie does work a little twist on the usual plot by having Irene refuse to accept money to dump Eric, and instead insist on re-starting her affair with his father (usually, the “unsuitable” young woman would just refuse the money and either disappear or stubbornly continue her relationship with the young man).

But without these sub-plots (and sort of a sub-plot about Sammy and his non-relationship with his parents) Ratas de asfalto wouldn’t have much plot at all, to tell the truth. The rest of the movie is little more than scenes of speeding cars, people watching races, and so forth. The car stunts were done by Ronald Ross and Speed Stearns, imported from the USA (Ross and Stearns also worked together in 1977 on Joy Ride to Nowhere), and are adequate but not spectacular (the crashes are almost always in slo-mo, which makes them look staged—which they were!—and minimizes the impact, no pun intended).

The performances in Ratas de asfalto are good, although Ana Martín seems to have wandered in from a different movie entirely. Carlos Derbez (who looks a lot like Enrique Lizalde) rates an “introducing” credit here, although he’d already been in Mil caminos tiene la muerte—he’s good, as are Olea and Campos, although Olea and Derbez both look a little too old for their roles (the characters’ ages are never specifically mentioned, but Campos is supposed to be “starting” college soon). Tere
Velázquez is also impressive as Sammy's sexy mom (Velázquez has a topless scene towards the end of the film and looks like she had some work done in the bust area), while Raúl Meraz is convincingly obnoxious as her husband (who denies that the hanging corpse in the final scene is his son—"My son's been studying in the USA for the last year").

Mi nombre es Sergio, soy alcohólico [My Name is Sergio, I'm an Alcoholic] (Estudios América, 1978) Exec Prod: Jorge Durán Chávez; Dir: Juan Alfonso Chavira; Scr: Jacha [Juan Alfonso Chavira]; Photo: Jorge Senyal; Music: Ernesto Cortázar Jr.; Prod Mgr: Enrique Gutiérrez, Asst Dir: Antonio Javier Castro; Film Ed: José J. Munguía; Art Dir: Fernando Ramírez; Camera Op: Manuel Tejada; Makeup: Marcela Bravo A.; Sound Op: Francisco Stempler; Sound Ed: Enrique Murillo; Re-rec: Ricardo Saldívar, Union: STIC

Cast: Andrés Garcia (Sergio aka "Andrés Gómez"), Hilda Aguirre (Carmen), July Furlong (Claudia), Aarón Hernán (Javier), Lilía Prado (Claudia's mother), Aurora Clavel (former bargirl), Juan Antonio Edwards (Basilio Trejo), Eduardo Alcaraz (Dr. Armando Camarena Blake), Martha Elena Cervantes (Isabel), Guillermo Hernández (burly wino), Ivonne Govea, Héctor Godoy (private detective), Lulú Torres, Inés Murillo (Sra. Trejo), Polo Salazar (AA officer), Issa Azzárate, Luis Manuel Pelayo (Rogelio Esquivel), Leandro Espinoza (slick panhandler), Nora Veryán, Rosita Cue, Ma. Elena Orendain, Manuel Sioridia "Mr. Kelly," Enrique Bermúdez Olivera, Marco Aurelio Moncada Krauss, Ricardo Ritz, Gelo Diaz Barriga, Ana Graciela Díaz B., Graciela Oehmichen, Joaquín Bauche Alcalde (?doctor), Ramón Yáñez V., Agustín Álvarez Briones, Federico von Son, Humberto Velasco, Manuel Velázquez Uribe, Fernando Swan, Pedro Bautista, Sergio Armas, Armando Flores Escobar, Aída Velázquez, Lucy Martínez, Gloria Salido, Ramón Larrea, Homero Da Bricio, Salvador "Chavalito" Saldívar, Raúl González Avilez, José Melgarejo, Efrén Herrera Iracheta, Fernando Eguía, Guillermo Medina, Porfirio Tellez, Miguel Medina Betancourt, Fernando Hernández, ?Juan Alfonso Chavira (Juan, man at AA meeting), Jorge Arriaga (waiter), Vicente Lara "Cacama" (old panhandler), Agustín Fernández (domino player who stabs Javier), Queta Carrasco, "Guillermo Herrera (bum"

Notes: Juan Alfonso Chavira, aka "Jacha," worked on the scripts for several dozen films and directed two, the independent, multi-story El hombre propone... (1964) made in Guadalajara, and Mi nombre es Sergio, soy alcohólico. The latter is basically a feature-length public-service announcement for Alcoholics Anonymous, and while this is not a bad thing (and the movie is certainly sincere, if anything), there are 2 or 3 incomplete sub-plots wandering around, interspersed with scenes of AA meetings, which hardly makes for compelling viewing.

The basic plot involves Sergio, who as the film opens is drunkenly contemplating a suicide pact with his (equally drunk) lover Carmen. Carmen takes the pills but Sergio changes his mind and leaves. He moves to Mexico City and tries to start over, using the name "Andrés Gómez," but slips back into alcoholism. However, several AA representatives convince him to help them redeem the youthful Basilio, and--after a bout of the DTs (represented by a nightmare sequence that would have made Chano Urueta proud, full of shots of snakes and rats climbing over corpses and skeletons, quick cuts, zooms, etc.)--Sergio himself joins AA. When he reaches the first anniversary of sobriety, Sergio is surprised by the arrival of his parents and...Carmen! She didn't die, after all (despite a newspaper headline Sergio had previously seen). It appears Carmen and her family knew where Sergio was all the time (they hired a private detective), but they didn't intervene, believing he had to conquer his illness of his own free will. As the movie concludes, Sergio and Carmen get married, and their AA friends attend the wedding reception.

This is all well and good (although not particularly gripping or well-acted), but the film also includes some almost incomprehensible sub-plots. To wit:

(a) Carmen's father, Dr. Camarena, operates to restore the eyesight of Claudia. She's the daughter of AA member Javier, seen in the film's opening sequence being stabbed in a drunken brawl over a domino game! How Dr. Camarena got to know Claudia is not clear, and in fact Javier's relationship to Claudia is only revealed at the conclusion.

(b) Dr. Camarena and his sister Isabel help composer Rogelio Esquivel get back on his feet, purchasing a piano and helping him finance a new orchestra. This is apparently because Camarena was friends with Rogelio's father, but the details of their relationship are not explained (and is Rogelio supposed to be an alcoholic? Again, unclear).

The "back stories" behind these sub-plots seem to have been omitted, although whether this footage was cut...
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(product of Chief, Film Ed, Makeup, Dir)

promote Alcoholics Anonymous, but it's just a little pat.

Despite the fact that the cast list goes on forever, there are several prominent performers (such as Agustín Fernández—who appears in the first scene!—and Queta Carrasco) who aren't billed at all, oddly enough.

The production values are generally satisfactory but, as noted earlier, the acting isn't uniformly good. Andrés García and Hilda Aguirre aren't very believable in the "suicide" scene, and many of the other actors seem to have taken the opportunity to "play drunk" as a chance to overact. Conversely, the dialogue, although at times didactic, has some interesting spots.

Its heart is in the right place, but Mi nombre es Sergio, soy alcohólico isn't particularly good.

GOOD AND BAD GIRLS

Rosalinda ("La flor de la costa") [Rosalinda: the Flower of the Coast] (Prods. Raúl de Anda, 1944)

Dir: Rolando Aguilar; Scr Adapt & Story: Rolando Aguilar, Carlos Gaytán; Orig. Idea: Eduardo Fernández O.; Photo: Jesús Hernández; Music: Rosalio Ramírez; Prod Chief: Enrique Morfin; Asst Dir: Carlos L. Cabello; Film Ed: Carlos Savage; Art Dir: José Rodríguez Granada; Makeup: Conchita Zamora; Sound: [B.J.] Kroger; Sound Op: Eduardo Fernández O.

Cast: María Antonieta Pons (Rosalinda), Rafael Baledón (Armando), Tito Junco (Gumaro), Agustín Isunza (Simón), Meche Izanda [aka Meche Barba] (Luisa), Miguel Ángel Ferriz (Encarnación "don Chon" Tapia), Luis G. Barreiro (elderly lookout), Guillermo Calles (Juan), Alfonso Bedoya (Cecina); "Los Ticuines"—Jorge Arriaga, Gilberto González, Max L. Montenegro; Jose I. Rocha (man in cantina), Chel López (gringo ship captain), Roberto Corell (Guillermo el Peruano), José Chávez Trowe (cantina idler), José L. Murillo (man waiting for Armando in rain), Stefan Verne (bald sailor), José Pardavé (man who makes necklace)

Notes: Rosalinda, released on DVD several years ago, is a very well-produced, long (over 100 minutes) period tropical melodrama. As García Riera observes, the presence of María Antonieta Pons and Meche "Izanda" (Barba) would suggest that the movie would be loaded with musical numbers, but in fact there are no songs or dances in the picture at all, despite plentiful opportunities.

Still, fans of Pons and Barba should be pleased since the actresses look quite young and attractive in their skimpy—if not exactly historically-accurate—costumes. The plot is rather involved and the 100+ minutes move along briskly with a variety of events. Rosalinda was shot partly on location in Zihuatenejo and the attractive landscapes add to the movie's charm; the film was originally released in a sepia-tone process, which is preserved in the DVD version.

1854: Rosalinda lives with her adoptive father, don Chon, in a fishing village on Mexico's Pacific coast. Gumaro is attracted to the young woman and repeatedly starts in brawls in the local cantina when other men mention her name. Rosalinda likes Gumaro but resents his possessive attitude. Don Chon refuses to intervene but does encourage Gumaro to seek out a hidden cove where pearl-bearing oysters may be found in abundance; years before, Chon tried to find the spot but was forced to turn back. Gumaro, who has been collecting perfect pearls to make a necklace for Rosalinda, decides to try.

Meanwhile, historian Armando and his friend Simón arrive from the capital. Armando is searching for the wreck of an 18th-century treasure ship, lost somewhere off the coast. The two men search in vain, but Simón falls in love with Luisa, an attractive friend of Rosalinda, and Rosalinda herself becomes interested in Armando. Because a priest visits the village only once a year, local custom states a man and woman are "married" if they spend three days alone on the island of Caucaán, a short distance from the village. Armando forces Simón and Luisa to undergo a church wedding—they all travel to another village to find a priest—but Rosalinda tricks Armando into rowing her to Caucaán and sets their canoe adrift. Armando refuses to admit he is now Rosalinda's "husband." On the third day, one of the three villainous Ticuines brothers arrives on the island and makes a pass at Rosalinda, but is knocked down by Armando.

However, back on the mainland, Armando continues to deny his "marriage." He plans to return to the city but remains until Gumaro returns from his pearl quest, so as not to be considered a coward. Rosalinda cooks and cleans for Armando but leaves his hut each night to stay with

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Simón and Luisa. Gradually, Armando and Rosalinda become friends once more.

Gumaro and his friend Juan discover the mother lode of pearl-bearing oysters and amass a fortune in pearls, but Juan dies on the return trip. Gumaro orders a necklace to be made from the choicest pearls he has found, but then learns Rosalinda and Armando are man and wife. Before Armando can explain, Gumaro attacks him but is bitten by a poisonous snake before he can kill the visitor from the city. Rosalinda takes care of the bitter Gumaro as he recuperates.

Armando prepares to depart, but discovers a hidden compartment in a cameo necklace Rosalinda was wearing when—at three years of age—she was found adrift on the sea by don Chon. A note inside proves Rosalinda is descended from a noble Spanish family. Armando informs Rosalinda and Gumaro of this fact, then leaves, but returns to Gumaro's hut when he hears a gunshot. The Ticuines, in search of the pearl necklace and Rosalinda, have attacked. The mortally wounded Gumaro still has enough strength left to strangle two of the brothers; the third is killed in a knife duel with Armando.

As the film concludes, Rosalinda and Armando are married in a church; she puts the pearl necklace on a figure of the Virgin Mary, then the newlyweds depart for their honeymoon on the island of Cauancán.

Rosalinda is somewhat reminiscent of a ranchera, in that Gumaro is not depicted as a villainous character. He loves Rosalinda por la buena and doesn't stoop to any dirty tricks to possess her (he does scare off any other suitors, though). He risks his own life to search for pearls, hoping this will impress her enough to accept his marriage proposal, and he reacts in an understandably jealous and irate manner—but not a villainous manner—when he discovers she's gotten married in his absence. He has to die, of course, so Rosalinda can marry Armando (especially after it turns out she's upper-class). The film's real villains are the Ticuines—played by three veteran villains of Mexican cinema—Gilberto González, Max Langler, and Jorge Arriaga—but they're really peripheral to the main plot, except to serve as motivators for the final confrontation that leaves Gumaro dead and out of the way.

The cast of *Rosalinda* is very good. Pons is attractive and chipper, wearing a sort of tube top and a flowered skirt slit to expose her legs, and a big blonde wig. She doesn't have to express a very wide range of emotions but does have at least one good and understated dramatic scene, when Rosalinda and Armando return from Cauancán. Rafael Baledón looks a bit too "sensitive" to be very convincing in the fight scenes, but is otherwise adequate as Armando. Tito Junco (wearing a not-too convincing wig) is pretty good as Gumaro, while Agustín Isunza plays it almost straight as Simón. As mentioned earlier, Meche Barba is attractive and personable as Luisa, and the other supporting players are also fine.

The production values are excellent, although the musical score at times is a little inappropriate—in one fight scene, for example, a jaunty little tune is heard on the soundtrack! The print used for the DVD release is in very nice shape with no major flaws.

Quite enjoyable in spite of the lack of songs or dances by Pons and Barba.

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**La satánica** [The Satanic One] (Acuario Films, 1971) Exec Prod: Alfonso Morones; Prod: Raúl Ramírez; Dir: Alfredo B. Crevenna; Adapt: Alfredo B. Crevenna, Alfonso Morones; Story: Fernanda Villeli; Orig. Telenovela: María Antonieta Gómez; Photo: Raúl Martínez Solares; Music: Leo Acosta; Asst Dir: Pedro López P.; Film Ed: Alfredo Rosas Priego; Lighting: Pedro Vázquez; Camera Op: Teodoro García; Sound Op: Octavio Morones; Re-rec: Salvador Topete; Sound Ed: Abraham Cruz; Eastmancolor; Filmed in: Guatemala

**Cast:** Raúl Ramírez (Alejandro Montalvo), Norma Lazareno (Rosángel), Marcela Daviland (La Negra), Raymundo Capetillo (José Montalvo), Ana Luisa Pelufo [sic] (Regina de Montalvo), Aurora Alonso (Nacha), Willy Toriello (Enrique), Arturo Soto E. (Alfredo), Augusto Monterroso (López, hotel mgr.), Rita Lara, Jaime Halcón, René García, Ingrid Braunschweig (Ingrid?), Clarita Toriello

**Notes:** familiar melodrama about a "bad" young woman who comes between a father and son, both of whom fall in love with her. Although shot in Guatemala, only one sequence (at Lake Atitlán) makes any use of Guatemalan locations (in fact, most of the film is shot indoors). Only the unfamiliar supporting players and the sub-standard production values (the video copy I saw looked horrible,
but it might have been the fault of the transfer) tip this off as a "runaway" film shot outside of Mexico for budgetary reasons.

Rosángel hitches a ride with a young man who boasts he is the chauffeur for the rich Alejandro Montalvo. He gives the young woman Montalvo's card and phone number so she can call him later. However, Rosángel uses the card to bluff her way into a luxurious hotel suite and to buy numerous outfits of clothes, charging them to Montalvo. She also makes an anonymous call to Montalvo, claiming she saw his photo in a magazine and fell in love with him. This flatters the middle-aged businessman, although he is happily married to the still-attractive Regina. Nacha, Rosángel's aunt (?), has been working as an assistant to nightclub singer "La Negra" (despite her name, she has blonde hair), but leaves this post to hang around and "advise" Rosángel on how to handle the situation.

When he gets the bill for Rosángel's expenses, Montalvo angrily confronts her. She puts on an act and says she is sorry, was madly in love with him, has no one to turn to, and so forth. She later pretends to be ill and threatens suicide. Montalvo falls for the trick and installs her in an apartment at his expense. Later, on a trip to the resort at Lake Atitlán, Rosángel meets José, Montalvo's college-student son. They have a brief idyll, using the names "Alvaro" and "Linda." Rosángel falls in love with José and wants to break off her affair with Montalvo (she does not know Montalvo and José are father and son until almost the end of the film--while it's barely plausible they would have used their fake names at Lake Atitlán, it is really hard to believe Rosángel and José would make marriage plans without her ever knowing his last name!). However, she changes her mind long enough to ask Montalvo for 50,000 pesos to buy a house, intending to use the money instead to support herself and José while the latter finishes school. Nacha, seeing her meal ticket threatened by Rosángel's decision, snitches to Montalvo. Montalvo and José confront each other. José is disillusioned when he learns she slept with his father to earn the 50,000 pesos, despite her protests that she did it for him. Rosángel leaves, saddened her "honest" attempt to find true love has failed. She's picked up by a carload of revelers and goes off with them. Montalvo and his son reconcile.

La satánica was cut for TV and video (I have not seen the DVD version, so I can't evaluate that): stills and lobby cards for the theatrical release show a nude Norma Lazareno in bed with Raymundo Capetillo and nude in a bathtub, scenes which do not appear in the VHS video version. Curiously, Rosángel tells José she didn't have sex with her "protector," and the film suggests this is true, except for the last time when she "earned" her 50,000 pesos. If so, then Montalvo wasn't getting much in exchange for his financial support up to that point! This doesn't make Rosángel's character seem any more admirable: she's either a prostitute or a swindler, not much moral difference either way. And even though she falls in love "for real," this doesn't stop her from trying to make one final score off Montalvo.

Lazareno is effective in her role, as are Capetillo and Ramirez, although Montalvo seems pretty gullible for someone who is supposedly such a powerful businessman. The sub-plot with La Negra (played by Ramirez's real-life wife Marcela Daviland) goes nowhere, and Ana Luisa Peluffo has very little to do as Montalvo's wife. As noted earlier, the video version I saw has very bad, dark and washed-out photography, which might be the fault of the transfer or of the Eastmancolor print used in the '80s to make the transfer to video.