

BUSTY ISABEL AND HER 'BO' (FOR WORLD B.O.)

'Hostages': Fresh — As Headlines

Cardona Trio Preps 'Amazons' — Lashes Out At Emasculation of 'Guyana'

Mexico City. About the biggest Mexican producer making product geared to the world market is Real Productions, which last year produced "Guyana, the Crime of the Century," distributed in the U.S. by Universal.

Director Rene Cardona Jr. and producer Alfonso Lopez Negrete have now completed a new fresh-as-headlines item titled "Hostages." Screenplay concerns terrorists who kill ex-dictator of an Arab country. Though some parallels exist with the Yank hostage situation in Iran and the deposed Shah, Cardona stated that pic did not mean to portray the recent political happenings, but rather to present the worldwide concern with the modern era crime of taking political hostages.

"Hostages" toplines Stuart Whitman, Marisa Mell, Gianni Machia, Antonella Interlengui, Paco Rabal, Victoria Vega and Hugo Stiglitz. Minority coproducers are Herald Films (Rome) and Lotus and Izaro Films in Madrid. Pic was lensed in English, Spanish and Italo versions in Puerto Rico. Budget was about \$2,000,000.

'Treasure of Amazon'

Real is now readying another film titled "The Treasure of the Amazons" concerning gold-prospectors in the late 1940s in South America. It's expected to roll in June with an international cast. Location shooting may be done in Ecuador. Cardona and three others are presently working on script and hope to get a Yank "coproducer" involved in the project.

Shooting sked would require three to four weeks in the Amazon region, followed by two weeks in the Chapas jungles in Mexico and then some scenes in Acapulco and studios at Churubusco in Mexico City.

Banner has also recently produced four pix for local market titled "Verano Salvaje," "Johnny Chicano," "Burlesque" and "El Mundo Clandestino del Aborto."

Chides Universal

Anent the recently-released Guyana film, Cardona was most critical of the version that Universal had distributed in the U.S., which, he felt, had emasculated all explicatory and controversial ingredients of the film. Said Cardona:

"I completely agree with the bad reviews my film got in the U.S. I would have been even more critical after the mutilations carried out by Universal. You can't take away the 'why' of the situation and expect it to make any sense. Pic was based on questions I asked myself about the Jonestown situation, but Universal wanted to "smooth over" the crime, which can't be done. They thought it would be more commercial that way. I made the film as a kind of protest, but all that part was cut out. Perhaps Universal felt it might have been too critical of U.S. society. Since it's a touchy subject, they took the easiest route. What was interesting in the pic were the questions people asked about the Guyana suicides."

Apparently deleted from the U.S. version of the film were the opening scenes in San Francisco in which Jones explains to his congregation the reasons for leaving the U.S. as well as later references to the colony's socialistic practices, men-

tions that they were being harassed by the CIA and efforts to establish liaisons with Soviet Russia.

Guastella Produces Blurbs In San Juan

San Juan.

Film production for video spots and theatrical advertising is perking in Puerto Rico, opined Eduardo Zayas who runs the New York office of Guastella Film Producers Inc. owned by Roberto Guastella.

Zayas refers to about 350 commercials a year, shot mostly in Puerto Rico and New York for the Hispano market for such top labels as MacDonald's, Campbell, Scott, Colgate, Bulova and others. This was a leap of about 30% over 1978.

TV Prod. Growth

Part of the increase, said Zayas, was due to the growth of local television production in Puerto Rico, which includes soapers, variety shows, talk and news programs. A primetime spot in San Juan now costs about \$750. Zayas added that the outfit had also been selling its product to Venezuela, Guatemala and Santo Domingo.

Guastella product unspools on Puerto Rican screens via variety and news shorts called "Cine Revista" and "Cine Periodico" which are shown on the island's 98 theatres, with attendance averaging about 125,000 a week. Guastella set up his company about 15 years ago. The commercials in cinemas began in 1961.

N.Y.'S FILM ELEMENTS CATERS TO LATINS

Among New York laboratories a principal contact with Latin filmmakers is Film Elements, run by Alex Goldstein, as president and Harvey Quintal, as exec veep. They set up operations in 1972.

Said Quintal: "Contacts with Latin filmmakers has been on the increase and this year we expect to be doing more biz with them than ever before. At present we're on the verge of opening our own lab facilities in the building which will do all printing and developing."

More Involved

The exec added that lab has been doing biz for three to four years with customers from Peru, Venezuela and Bolivia and plans to get more involved in servicing for these areas and providing final soundtrack, release prints, blow-ups and negatives.

"Biz has been perking to such an extent," added Quintal, "that we're opening an office in Lima, called Film Elements del Peru. We hope to increase coverage in Peru, Venezuela, Colombia, Chile, Central America and Puerto Rico. We have the impression of a simmering cauldron, and if we play it right it'll become a big market for us. One problem has been communications, so we've set up a telex in our office in Lima."

Film Elements processed three features over the latter half of 1979. Quintal and Goldstein expect biz at least to double this year with the Latins.

SIMPLISTIC SEX AS GLOBAL PRODUCT

By PETER BESAS

Buenos Aires.

Armando Bo is an example, par excellence, of an Argentinian film maverick. For 18 years he has been making films with his leading lady Isabel Sarli which have probably been seen by more people in more places in the world than any other Argentinian product.

Bo is alternately laughed at and applauded in his own country, since his films are often unabashedly simplistic, his plots directly based on showing female pulchritude and his budget often a shoestring. But Bo has a special knack which makes his films popular with audiences. They are his and Isabel Sarli's audiences and they have kept faith with him through the years. Armando Bo has done well economically in films, though he started out as a humble, untutored film assistant.

"Bo" often spells "b.o." in anything he touches, because he is in touch with popular tastes. Given the sort of films he has made, Bo not surprisingly has been one of the staunchest defenders of freedom in film and has fought a running battle with the censors ever since he made his first pic "El Trueno Entre las Hojas" (Thunder Between the Leaves). Since then he has made 30 more features, including "Fuego," "Carne," "Fiebre" and "La Diosa Virgen."

In an interview with *Variety*, Armando Bo let loose clusters of bon mots and some very personalized views on filmmaking and the industry as a whole.

Isabel As In Sex

"To forbid one of our pictures in Argentina," he quipped, "is almost a matter of snobbery. Now that the National Film Institute is handing out credits, there are loads of films that never open. The only time I got government aid was for 'Amor en Tierra de Fuego,' which I made according to the rules and which was released without cuts. But that's not what the public wants. The public wants to see Isabel in sex scenes."

Bo then reminisced: "When we did our first pix 18 years ago they threw the book at us. I remember in 1959 they hauled us into the police station to play the little piano (take fingerprints). Four criminal charges were lodged against us. However I don't consider my pix pornography. When I started, everyone wanted to see Isabel, wanted to see voluptuous Isabel, her fabulous physique. And that's still the case. But the censors ... if I showed them an overdeveloped photo in black and told them it was Isabel Sarli they'd prohibit it. But if others rob and kill and do mayhem, then it's OK."

A World Marketeer

As a maverick, Bo doesn't feel himself a part of the general Argentinian film scene. "We have nothing to do with films here," he asserted, adding that in 1967 when he was in jail for having insulted a censor, not a single film personality offered him a helping hand or had a good word to put in for him. Though there was a journalist, Isidro Gabriel, who came to his aid. The film in question was "La Mujer de mi Padre."

"Then under Lanusse," he went (Continued on page 44)

Hollywood's 'Nosotros' Group Seeks Screen, Tube Casting For Hispanos, Not Just As 'Heavy'

Los Angeles.

"Nosotros" is the Spanish word for "we." It is also the name of an Los Angeles-based actors' and directors' association made up of persons of Spanish-speaking origin that is seeking to improve the image of Hispanos on the screen. Nosotros is trying to promote acting employment opportunities for Hispanos. It even trains its members in theatre workshops.

The non-profit organization was founded about 10 years ago by actor Ricardo Montalban and it now has some 250 members, including performers of Cuban, Mexican and Puerto Rican backgrounds. Prez is Jerry G. Velasco, and veep is James Espinoza.

In a *Variety* interview, Espinoza clarified: "Basically Nosotros is for Hispanos, but we also have blacks and Anglos. If they are serious about helping, they can join."

Video Actors

"The bulk of our members are film and video actors and actresses, but there are also some directors. Basically our activities are confined to the Los Angeles area, but this year we hope to go national. We've also made some contacts with Puerto Rico, but mostly through political and artistic groups. Most of us are Mexican-Americans."

Espinoza emphasized that Nosotros' members were not seeking work in the Spanish-lingo film and video markets, which are very limited, but in English.

"For too long now the Hollywood Syndrome has ignored us. We're part of the American way of life. But the only time we get a part is when we're cast in a gang, or as a bandit or a prostitute. We don't mind doing those parts; too, as long as we get paid."

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'TAXISTA MILLONARIO' FOR U.S. VIA COL PICS

Columbia Pictures Spanish Division in New York City has picked up distribution of "El Taxista Millonario" produced by Centauro Films in Bogota, per pic's helmer Gustavo Nieto Roa. Item will play-off in Hispano circuits of U.S.

Nieto Roa, who was in Gotham for post-production on "Amor Ciego" toplining Jaime Moreno and Patty Koter, reported that "Taxista" had beat all records at Colombia wickets, totalling 1,300,000 tix sold in first two months of release in six cities.

"Amor Ciego" is due to open in Bogota on May 1. Set to roll next week is a new untitled tuner with Claudia de Colombia, Julio Aleman, Jaime Moreno and Amparo Grisales. Centauro has so far produced four features. Their "Esposas en Vacaciones" will preem in Caracas on April 9 via the Empresa Cines Unidos distribberty. Previously Nieto Roa had fourwalled his product in the U.S. but henceforth plans to work thru regular distribts.

Also slated is a film to be shot in Miami, New York and LA, using thespes from all three Hispano ethnic areas.

Latin Theatre Census

Following are the estimated numbers of theatres in key Latin republics.

Argentina, 1,450
Chile, 120
Brazil, 3,000
Bolivia, 90
Colombia, 1,000
Ecuador, 260
Mexico, 2,700
Paraguay, 250
Peru, 400
Venezuela, 650

Maxifilm, Distrib, Expands As Exhib

Buenos Aires.

Maxifilm, Argentinian distributor company headed by Dr. Emilio Gutierrez as president, Monica Wiebel, as director, and Ricardo Wulicher as manager is planning to expand operations into the exhib sector and last December bought property in centre of town (Calle Tucuman and Carlos Pellegrini) to build a new duplex. Theatres, skedded to be ready by March 1981, will be called Maxi 1 and 2 with seating capacity of 1,000 and 1,200.

Banner meanwhile marketed nine features last year, mostly French and Italo product, but also "The Martian Chronicle" and "The Legacy." Titles lined up for release this year so far include "The Water Babies," "Double Negative," "Comandos de la Muerte," "The Border" and "She."

Manager Ricard Wulicher told *Variety* that Maxifilm plans to release 28 features in 1980. Top Maxi grossers in 1979 were "La Clef Sur La Porte" which sold over 150,000 admissions, Claude Chabrol's "Blood Relatives" and local pic "La Isla." Maxifilm releases through the SAC circuit.

Stake Out Theatres

"In our first year of operation," affirmed Wulicher, "we were in the black. For this year we've invested about \$1,000,000 in product and we're quite optimistic, some of the (Continued on page 48)

Span Of N.Y. Sets 7

New York-based Span Films expects to release seven Latin films this year, per its chief, Lawrence Lehr. The recently set-up company will release Spanish pic "La Menor," directed by Pedro Maso on April 4 in the Miami area in a multiple release, following in New York in late April and Chicago and Los Angeles markets in late May.

Lehr has also acquired Maso's "La Miel" for U.S. Hispano play-off; and plans to preem item late fall or Christmas. Going nationwide in the summer will be "Las Colocadas." Partner in Span Films is Steve Florin.

"There has been tremendous neglect of the Latin market in the U.S.," opined Lehr. "Our aim is to distrib high quality fare, using high budgeted ad campaigns. Meanwhile we're looking for product from all Latin areas."