



Kathleen
Actual Member

Switched & Saved

\$ 400¹

FREE QUOTE TODAY

on Auto Insurance



DAILY BRUIN



UCLA partners with Getty Center to bring Spanish language films to LA

BY ALEXANDRA DEL ROSARIO

Posted: September 21, 2017 7:09 pm

[A&E](#), [FILM & TV](#)



[f SHARE](#)

[TWEET](#)

The UCLA Film and Television Archive returns the golden age of Spanish language cinema back to Main Street.

The Getty Center's second iteration of the arts initiative "Pacific Standard Time" spotlights the Latin American creative space in Los Angeles, titled "Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA." UCLA's Film and Television Archive teamed up with the Getty to create a lineup of approximately 40 Spanish-language films hailing from different Spanish-speaking countries including Mexico, Argentina and Cuba for the exhibition.

The archive restored and rediscovered around 40 Spanish language films, some considered lost or irrelevant, from the golden age of films – the 1930s to 1960s – with the aim of sharing them with a wider audience. Film presentations will take place at the Billy Wilder Theater in Westwood and the Downtown Independent, formerly the Aztec theater, in downtown LA from Sept. 23 to Dec. 10.

"We're excited to share these films (with) the Anglo audience and memorialize another hub of cinema beyond Hollywood," said the archive's director, Jan-Christopher Horak.

The exhibition has been in the works since the Getty announced the event in 2013, Horak said. And while the archive was deciding what to present for the exhibit, Horak encountered a manuscript of a UCLA dissertation by a doctoral candidate, Colin Gunckel. Gunckel's book, "Mexico on Main Street," described the Spanish language cinema culture of downtown LA and served as a starting point for the archive's exhibition, Horak said.

"The subject was really interesting because I had never heard of the downtown LA theaters presenting Spanish language titles," he said.

Most Latin American theaters that presented the Spanish language films were physically wiped out after World War II, Horak said. Caucasian soldiers moved to downtown LA as part of urban renewal programs, forcing Spanish-speaking residents to leave the cultural hub, he said. He added he thinks the three-month-long film exhibit will allow Angelenos and film historians to change their perspectives on cinema beyond Hollywood.

After reading "Mexico on Main Street," Horak created the curatorial and research teams, which included himself, Gunckel, former students and Maria Elena de las Carreras, a lecturer of film and television at UCLA.

De las Carreras, an expert on Argentine cinema, said the curatorial process for creating the exhibition's film lineup took into consideration run time, stars and technical quality to give audience members a snapshot of the Spanish language film industry during the golden age of cinema. In addition to foreign films, the exhibit will show Spanish films produced by American producers like Fox and MGM, she said. Audiences can expect to see comedies, dramas, crime films and more.

"The common denominator with all the films is that you see they're a lot of fun to watch; they might be in black and white with subtitles, but you can recognize the quality of storytelling," she said.

"El Vampiro Negro," a 1953 Argentine title which translates to "The Black Vampire," is an example of a film's ability to reach an audience through universal themes and stories, she said.

De las Carreras said she hopes audiences will understand the context of downtown LA and realize its role in cultural exchange by showing the films in the former hub of Latin American cinema culture.

"Watching these films and understanding their participation in the golden age of cinema is like uncovering a new continent," she said. "You have the map, the road to these things, and when you get to see the stuff up close and personal, you see the wealth and variety."

However, putting on the exhibition required research on various topics, ranging from the Latin American stars who visited the now mostly demolished theaters in LA, such as the Teatro Hidalgo, to audience experiences of Spanish-language films in those theaters, said researcher and UCLA alumnus Roberto Green Quintana.

Since he joined the archive team around two years ago, Green Quintana has analyzed articles documenting the perception of Spanish films in the United States from various publications including the Los Angeles Times and Spanish publications such as *La Opinión*.

"The reactions to these films varied because they were considered not as good as the hit American titles and supposedly copied the common conventions of those films, but the movies were popular among Spanish speakers," Green Quintana said.

In addition to viewing the films as unoriginal, Green Quintana said American critics did not discuss the classic Latin films because they were not as readily available as American movies, so most Americans were unaware of them.

"We think we have seen all the movies there are, but films can act like time machines, showing us how different generations and cultures deal with universal topics," he said.

Horak said he hopes audiences will acknowledge the long tradition of great cinema originating in the Spanish-speaking countries. The exhibit should also make Angelenos understand the city's rich diversity, he said.

"I think it's time to resurrect the fact that there was a film culture in downtown LA and emphasize that we have always been a multicultural city," Horak said.

