

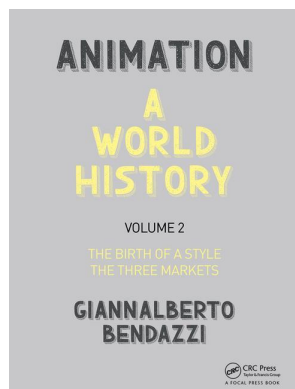
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## **Animation: A World History Volume II: The Birth of a Style—The Three Markets**

Giannalberto Bendazzi

### **Latin America**

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## LATIN AMERICA

**Mexico**

The 1950s brought television to Mexico, with the usual results: reduction of movie theatre attendance, beginning of TV commercials and so on. The Cold War was influential in our field, too: the Dibujos Animados company was launched, financed and professionally equipped by Richard K. Tompkins from the USIA (United States Information Agency). The studio, whose artistic director was the already mentioned Ernesto Terrazas and whose crew included old professionals as Carlos Sandoval, Ernesto López and Claudio Baña, was commissioned to produce six anti-communist propaganda shorts.<sup>1</sup>

In four years, Dibujos Animados produced twelve shorts and Terrazas designed four attractive characters. As in Disney's *The Three Caballeros*, in these shorts the 'Mexican' element was faint and, despite the management's claims of patriotism, it completely disappeared by the third film. Only one of the Dibujos Animados shorts was actually shown in Mexico – *Manolín Torero*, which was screened on 1 July 1954 at the Alameda movie theatre in Mexico City. The studio became established as one of the strongest support companies for moviemaking and television in the nation, and produced documentaries, commercials, special effects, dubbing and so on.<sup>2</sup>

In 1955, Ernesto López and Leobardo Galicia, in their turn, founded Cinemuñecos, producing more than 300 commercials for both movie theatres and television.

The Val-Mar studios, the outcome of the association between Gustavo Valdez, a rich civil engineer, and his brother-in-law Jesús Martínez, an architect, was born in

1957. Valdez and Martínez enrolled omnipresent Ernesto Terrazas as studio director; and he engaged most of his former colleagues to form the team. They mainly produced commercials, but also a successful short: *El Cucaracho*.<sup>3</sup> In 1959, Gustavo Valdez got in touch with the US Jay Ward Productions, which was producing the TV series *Rocky and His Friends* (1959–64) and, in one of the earliest examples of a US TV series contracting production work outside the States, arranged to animate most of the series at Val-Mar. Val-Mar complied, but Mexican animators didn't see their names in the credits. Animator César Cantón remembered: 'When we told the people at Jay Ward "How come our names are not there? We will protest to the unions", they answered something like "Oh yes, we'll fix this thing". So they put us in the credits. Do you know what they put in the credits? John Doe, Jane Doe, only American names, and then "a bunch of brothers". We were the "bunch of brothers"'.<sup>4</sup>

In 1960, Val-Mar changed its name to Gamma Productions. The quality of the output declined, for the usual reasons: tight deadlines, too much work, too little investment. In December 1966, Gamma closed for a special fortnight holiday and, upon their return, the animators found the premises empty, the company closed and their salaries gone.

**Venezuela<sup>5</sup>**

During the 1950s, animation was often chosen to make commercials – an easy way to spread the genre through

<sup>1</sup>Juan Manuel Aurrecochea, *El episodio perdido. Historia del cine mexicano de animación*, Mexico City: Cineteca nacional, 2004, pp. 56–57.

<sup>2</sup>Juan Manuel Aurrecochea, *El episodio perdido. Historia del cine mexicano de animación*, Mexico City: Cineteca nacional, 2004, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup>Juan Manuel Aurrecochea, *El episodio perdido. Historia del cine mexicano de animación*, Mexico City: Cineteca nacional, 2004, 69.

<sup>4</sup>Juan Manuel Aurrecochea, *El episodio perdido. Historia del cine mexicano de animación*, Mexico City: Cineteca nacional, 2004, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup>By Francesca Guatteri.

the country. Luís Guillermo Villegas Blanco – founder, in 1940, of Bolívar Films, the first advertising film studio in the country – in 1952 created its animation department, hiring the young and promising Mauricio Anteri as an apprentice. Luís Guillermo Villegas Blanco also summoned the Peruvian Félix Nakamura and the Argentinian Jorge Prandi. Nakamura became the natural leader, and helped Armando Arce, Nora Marcano, Leopoldo Ponte, Jesús Quezada, Viveca Baiz and many more to refine their skills.

In 1952, with the coming of television, a new path was created. The first animated commercial aired by Venezuelan television was made for a client of the agency ARS Publicidad. This work, written and filmed at Bolívar Films, was directed by Luís Mejías. The product was the chocolate soft drink Pancho, and its character was a little cowboy on a horse.

Bolívar Film shortly became one of the most important Hispano-American studios for cinema and television animated short films, with its working team composed of Carlos Prino, Jorge Miclos and the Belgian brothers John and Ivan Descamp. For the same studio, Mejías realized his first full-colour animation for Creole, a car fuel brand.

## Brazil

The brothers Anélio Latini Filho (Nova Friburgo, 1926–Rio de Janeiro, 20 April 1986) and Mário Latini, the sons of an Italian immigrant who was a professor of fine arts, made in 1940 their first short film, *Azores de Lulu* (Lulu's Misfortune). The technique was still crude and the style was close to the Fleischer brothers'.

After that, Anélio learned as much technique as possible by incessantly reading manuals and viewing North American movies. While he loved Disney stylistically, thematically he felt close to Brazilian folklore. At twenty-four he asked writer Joaquim Ribeiro for a folkloric subject to transpose into a feature film. Ribeiro gave him seven legends of the Amazon Indians.

In 1947, the making of *Sinfonia amazônica* (Amazon Symphony) started. It was the first animated Brazilian feature film (sixty-three minutes). It was drawn, directed and produced by Anélio Latini Filho, while his brother Mario Latini was the photographer and also composed a samba

that was used in the musical score. The film was five years in the making, especially due to the poor equipment and the undersized crew.

Although Brazil did not have any labs for colour film development at the time, all the artwork was rendered in colour. Latini wished to show his film at least in light blue tones, but this attempt failed, and he was forced to settle for black and white. The movie was released simultaneously in eight Rio theatres; despite good reviews and large audiences, the producer/director, who was a poorly organized businessman, was not able to profit.

*Amazon Symphony* took its inspiration from Disney's *Fantasia*: through images and music, the movie introduces many typical characters of Brazilian folklore such as the Giant Cobra (lord of waters) or Curupira (lord of forests). The tales are linked by the facts and feats of the little native Curumi and his dolphin.<sup>6</sup>

For a short time, Anélio Latini Filho worked in advertising. Later, he sold his paintings to tourists in Copacabana. In 1968, he began a second feature film, *Kitan da Amazônia* (Kitan from Amazonia), which remained unfinished.

## Argentina<sup>7</sup>

The 1950s saw some new developments in avant-garde cinema. Filmmaker, cinema critic and organizer of cultural events Víctor Iturralde Rúa (1927–2004) deserves mention for his movies, which were drawn directly on film stock. He had seen McLaren's films, which employ the same technique, at specialized viewings. His productions include *Ideitas* (1952) and *Hic . . . !* (1958). Rodolfo Julio Bardi combined tiles, painted glass, threads and other materials in *Composición* (Composition, 1954). José Arcuri used geometric drawings to make a ten-minute abstract film entitled *Continuidad plástica* (Plastic Continuity, 1958).

Puppet films were also produced, particularly by specialist Carlos González Groppa. The most popular, *Trío* (1958), *Franc* (1959) and *Magia* (1960), won awards at a number of international festivals.

Up to the 1950s, Argentine animation had meant drawn cartoons for cinema, possibly with a satirical inclination. After 1951, a new development legitimized this art as a proper profession: television.

<sup>6</sup>During the making of the film, a short documentary was shot. This today allows us to discover the different steps and techniques used to give life to the movie.

<sup>7</sup>By Francesca Guatteri and Giannalberto Bendazzi.

Between 1955 and 1960, various studios dedicated exclusively to animated advertising shorts started to grow: MC Films (of Marcos Casado Sastre, Oscar Baigorria, Jorge Michel and Héctor Vena), Publifilm (José Zalmero), Ubaldo Galuppo and Jorge Caro, on his return from Perú. There were GB Aries, and Gil & Bertolini – where young Oscar Grillo and Miguel Nanni were particularly successful, later CI-TE-CO, Maherlandia (of Mario and Eduardo Maher), Producciones Constantini (of Carlos A. Constantini), Producciones Lambert (of Oscar Desplats and Néstor Córdoba), Yuyo's Film (of Mario and Aquiles Bertiller). And there were Producciones Cases (Hugo Cases, linked for a long time to García Ferré in his projects in publishing and animation), MEPA, Producciones Avance, of Alberto and Enrique del Castillo, Osvaldo García and Matías Domínguez, Printer Avance and Producciones García Ferré.

In Argentina, advertising made it possible to build a real animation industry, which engaged many already famous professionals, such as Burone Bruché, Jorge Caro and Juan Oliva, and made possible the development of a new generation of talents, like Del Castillo, Desplats, Grillo and Guillermo Mordillo.

This artistic growth of animators and film studios went hand in hand with the dawn of institutes and associations, such as the Cámara Argentina del Dibujo Animado in 1960 and the Asociación de Productores de Dibujos Animados in 1961, and the realization, during the same year, of the first Festival de Dibujos Animados Argentinos.

Around 1958, short movies became a fashionable format and a generation of artists developed, willing to establish their credentials in the cinema industry.<sup>8</sup> Héctor Franzi, Víctor Iturralde Rúa, Catú, Irene Dodal, Carlos Ochagavía, Burone Bruché and the puppet animator Carlos González Groppa were mainly dedicated to the realization of short movies. Franzi's production, much more focused on two-dimensional animation, stood out and resulted in the creation of *Mambrú* (1958), inspired by the famous popular namesake song, and *Collage* (1962).

The cartoon had regained its place in the intervals of the cinema shows, through the theatres monopolized by Lowe (the new company name of Emelco). And another market was opened: state television with Channel 7 TV, the first free broadcast channel installed in the country.

Taking shape, just then, was what would later on go down in history as *Generación Sesenta* – a group of creatives who shared nothing but restlessness and love for contemporary times.

The excellent skills and creativity displayed by some professionals, such as Ubaldo Galuppo, Manuel García Ferré, Víctor Iturralde Rúa and Rodolfo Julio Bardi, defines these years too.

Ubaldo Galuppo, born in Buenos Aires, worked with Bruché, becoming his chief animator and, after the closing of the studio, made for Cinepa countless commercials and entertainment shorts for cinemas and TV.

<sup>8</sup>This was especially so after it was possible to break the restrictions to the film industry imposed by Juan Domingo Perón's government, during his second mandate as president. A brief summary of the political happenings of the 1940s–50s is necessary. After the coup of 1930, the military maintained a firm grip on Argentinian politics, either directly or from the shadows. General Perón was elected president in 1946. He was a populist, and had the base of his power in the unions and in the lower class rather than in weapons. Ideologically, he shamelessly balanced himself between left and right wings, in search of a 'Third Position' neither capitalist nor communist; politically, he acted as an authoritarian leader. His popularity was enormous, especially thanks to his almost sanctified wife Evita Duarte, a true spiritual guide of the country. After Evita's death (1952) and Argentina's impoverishment due to excessive spending, he was forced to exile in 1955, but none of his successors was able to conquer a true consensus and to bring the country back to the previous richness.