



BORDERLINES FILM FESTIVAL

ADVENTURESS (*Aventurera*) (15)

Director: Alberto Gout

Starring: Ninón Sevilla, Tito Junco, Andrea Palma, Rubén Rojo
Mexico, 1950, 1 hour 41 minutes, Spanish + English subtitles

I have seen *Adventuress (*Aventurera*)* three times, and it never disappoints. Preposterous yet thoroughly entertaining, spotlights Cuban-Mexican singing and dancing star, Ninón Sevilla. Her character Elena's settled life takes an abrupt downturn followed by numerous barely credible swings of fate and fortune with which she copes admirably. The fast-moving plot is interspersed with musical turns including a number by crooner Pedro Vargas singing the title song, written by popular Agustín Lara.

Aventurera is a prime example of the rumbera film, a hybrid genre influenced by "the extravagant studio musicals made in Hollywood in the 1930s, the femmes fatales of film noir (both Mexican and from abroad) and the Afro-beats of Cuban rumba music, wildly popular in Latin America for most of the first half of the 20th century."

"Alberto Gout's *Aventurera* (1950), commissioned as a star vehicle for Sevilla, is widely considered the masterwork of the rumbera genre and offers a much more telling example of the shift in representation of women during this period of Mexican cinema. Sevilla plays Elena, an upper-middle-class woman sold into prostitution by a criminal acquaintance after her mother has an affair and her father commits suicide.

"Rather than positioning the virtuous mother against the figure of the fallen woman, the film quickly disposes of the maternal to engage instead in an unabashed and fetishistic celebration of Elena's beauty, street-smarts and barely contained eroticism. A fast-paced plot, peppered with extravagantly choreographed dance numbers (arranged by Sevilla herself), does something to distract from the extraordinary cruelty that Elena suffers in the film's first half. Critical of the city space as criminal and violent (the film takes place in the cities of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico City and Guadalajara), *Aventurera* is unusually liberal in allowing its protagonist the possibility of a happy ending, perhaps paving the way for films that would deal more kindly with prostitution in years to come, or even heralding the fichera films or sex comedies (Mexican cinema's answer to Carry On...) of the 1970s and 80s."

Extracts from Chloë Roddick, [Deep Focus: The Golden Age of Mexican Cinema](#)

Notes compiled by Jo Comino

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TAKE ME IN YOUR ARMS (*Liévame en tus Brazos*)

Erotic torments and class conflicts come to a head in Julio Bracho's formally daring masterpiece, one of the most important Mexican melodramas of the decade.

VICTIMS OF SIN (*Víctimas del Pecado*)

A sizzling, feverish film noir set in Mexico City's red-light district nightclubs, this explosive rumbera stars the sensationally versatile diva Ninón Sevilla, 'The Golden Venus'.